FAIZ 1911-2011
Pakistan Study Centre
University of Karachi

Faiz A POET OF **PEACE** FROM **PAKISTAN**

HIS POETRY, PERSONALITY AND PHILOSOPHY

KHALID SOHAIL
ASHFAQ HUSSAIN



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His Poetry, Personality and Philosophy

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Khalid Sohail
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Contents

Preface

The present book, *Faiz: A Poet of Peace from Pakistan,* has been put together by Mr. Khalid Sohail and Mr. Ashfaq Hussain from numerous articles. These articles were scattered in various journals and periodicals, while some of them remained unpublished. The two worthy compilers have taken pains to retrieve them, and have assembled them in a logical and coherint manner. For Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, it is a matter of pride that this book is being published by it in a series of publications on Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The publication of the series will form part of the Centre's activities to be held with reference to the birth centenary of the great poet.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz created his niche among the luminaries of Urdu literature by virtue of his unique voice, idiom and above all, his message. Faiz emerged on the poetic scene of Urdu in the fourth decade of the last century. It was the time when voices such as Iqbal, Hasrat, Jigar and Josh were already dominating the literary scenes of undivided India. Iqbal had already been designated as the biggest Urdu poet of the 20th century. In those days and at a time when Urdu literature was already touching the heights of what a great literature can be, it would not have been an easy undertaking to make oneself felt and create a place for oneself among one's great contemporaries. Faiz did that. The present writer does not claim the credentials to comment on the work of as great a poet as Faiz.

However, one feels tempted to express one's feelings on this occasion when all the students of literature and culture would like to express whatever they feel about the poetry of Faiz at the historic occasion of his birth centenary. Perhaps, the most important forte of Faiz was his ability to, first, acquire the consciousness of the social realities around him, and, second, to internalize these realities, making them a part of his personal existence. Not only this, he was also able to translate all this in a creative experience, employing a language which was at once modern as well as classical. Faiz is known for his exceptional diction which draws immensely from the classical poetry. It goes to his credit that his inspiration from classical poetry did not confine to Urdu poetry alone; he was equally conversant with Persian, Arabic, and English literature, and particularly, with their rich classical heritage. The rich reservoir of his literary knowledge compounded with his creative skills and applying both these to nurture a message of change for the betterment of humankind did the magic that is his poetry.

Coming on the occasion of Faiz centenary, it is hoped that this volume will certainly attract the attention of the readers and will be of use also for the researchers of literature and culture.

30 January 2011

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Chapter One

Introduction

Khalid Sohail

I have never met Faiz Ahmed Faiz but I still feel as if I know him. It is similar to my feeling that I know Meer Taqi Meer, Mirza Ghalib, Sigmund Freud, Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre, although I never met them. This feeling stems from the reality that I have studied their poems and essays, spent evenings with their creations and books, reflected on their ideas and ideals and learnt from their philosophies. Their lives have been a source of inspiration for me. But I also feel as if I know Faiz more than I know Meer, Ghalib, Freud, Russell or Sartre because I had the privilege of meeting people who had spent some time in Faiz's company. They were great admirers of his philosophy and included my father, Abdul Basit and my uncle Arif Abdul Mateen, who were his students in Amratsar India, and my friend, Ashfaq Hussain who wrote his Master's Thesis in Urdu on Faiz. When Ashfaq published an anthology about Faiz, I wrote an article about his poetry, personality and philosophy titled *Faiz...In Search of Freedom* and also interviewed Ashfaq about his relationship with Faiz in which he shared some fascinating details about Faiz's life.

All those people that I talked to seemed to be quite impressed by him. They painted the picture of a socialist saint. Interestingly, I have met many socialists who are not saints and many saints who are not socialists. Faiz had acquired so many qualities that usually do not co-exist in

one person. Faiz was a poet of peace who won the hearts of millions of men and women all over the world.

Faiz was a revolutionary in his philosophy but a teacher by personality. He was successful in sharing his ideas in a gentle, kind and compassionate way. As a student of human psychology, I am impressed by his personality as well as philosophy. I have met many revolutionaries who are angry young men ready to engage in angry debates and bitter fights with people from other philosophies and ideologies but Faiz always kept his composure. I feel it was because he had not only a humanist philosophy but also a humanist personality, which is a rare combination.

The thing that impresses me the most about Faiz is his diversity. He was a versatile genius. Although he was a poet in Urdu, he was a great scholar of English and Arabic literature. Although he lived most of his life in India and Pakistan, he had a keen interest in the creations of European, Latin American and African writers. Faiz had discovered the secrets of human existence and knew how a minority belonging to the privileged class had been exploiting the majority of deprived people for centuries. In his gentle tone, he wanted to inspire downtrodden people to speak up and fight for their rights. He knew that whispers could be more effective than screams.

It is not surprising that Faiz became a symbol of human rights and the struggle against exploitation. He helped us learn that peace could not be lasting if it was not married to justice. He is admired and adored by not only Asians but also by the people of many poor, struggling and developing countries.

Faiz was a shy and humble man but his poetry was so powerful that people from all disciplines promoted his message. When his poems were sung by famous singers like

Noor Jehan and verses painted by famous artists like Sadeqain, he became a celebrity, known to people from all cultural traditions. He became so famous in his lifetime that when hurriedly getting on a train, a European woman asked his address, he said, "Just write, 'Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Pakistan' and I will get the letter." That foreigner did not know that in his motherland he had won the hearts of all Pakistani postmen by writing poems for them when they were on strike and every postman in the country knew him. Faiz inspired the oppressed, the depressed and the suppressed to express themselves. He wrote,

Speak, your lips are free
Speak, it is your tongue
Speak, it is your own body
Speak, your life is still yours

See how in the blacksmith's shop
The flame burns wild, the iron glows red
The locks open their jaws
And every chain begins to break

Speak, this brief hour is long enough
Before the death of body and tongue
Speak, because the truth is not dead yet
Speak, speak, whatever you must speak
(Translated by Azfar Hussain)

After reading this poem, I realized that Faiz was not only a socialist saint, he was also a social therapist and knew that speaking one's truth and sharing one's painful story is the first step towards healing and liberation. Like a psychotherapist that helps his patients to share their truth in the therapy hour, the poet inspires his readers to share their truth publicly. As each human being achieves

liberation by breaking their inner chains and opening their hearts, all of humanity liberates itself. Faiz belonged to that group of poets and philosophers who dreamt of liberating all of humanity. He could not only see drops in the ocean but could also see the ocean in each drop.

Most of the books about Faiz are written in Urdu. To introduce Faiz to the Western world I wrote a number of essays in English and presented them at the annual Faiz Mailas in Toronto. They were also published on the Internet magazine www.chowk.com. While the whole world was preparing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his birth in 2011, Ashfaq Hussain and I met and decided that we would like to publish a collection of essays written in English by different scholars and research workers from diverse literary and cultural backgrounds. For such a collection I decided to translate Ashfaq's interview in English and also some chapters of Faiz's comprehensive biography written by Ashfaq Hussain. This is our humble attempt to introduce Faiz to the world, as a poet of peace from Pakistan. Pakistan, that was known as the land of mystic poets over the centuries, but unfortunately, in the recent past, is known as a land that exports 'suicide bombers'. It is sad how Pakistan and Pakistanis are caught in this international cycle of violence. At this time of global war, Faiz becomes a symbol of peace, inner as well as outer peace, emotional as well as social peace, national as well as international peace. Faiz's personality and philosophy continues to remain a source of inspiration for millions of lay people as well as elites, poets as well as philosophers, farmers as well as laborers, postmen as well as factory workers, as his poetry reflects their struggles all over the world.

November 2010

Chapter Two

The Life and Legacy of Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Khalid Sohail and Ashfaq Hussain

Most of the books about Faiz Ahmed Faiz are written in Urdu, and only a few of his poems have been translated into English. For a long time I had a desire to introduce Faiz to the Western readers like my sweetheart Bette Davis and my Canadian friends, so that they could appreciate his greatness and learn about his legacy. While I was reflecting on that subject, I came across my dear friend Ashfaq Hussain's book, *Faiz: Shakhsiat aur Fun* (Faiz: Personality and Art), a comprehensive biography that captures the essence of his life and legacy. This book with its more than 200 references is the basis for this essay, and it inspires readers to read more about Faiz, a poet of peace from Pakistan and one of the greatest poets of the Urdu tradition of the 20th century. Let me share a few highlights of his life.

Birth
Faiz was born in the Indian city of Sialkot, already famous as the birthplace of another renowned Urdu poet, Mohammad Iqbal. His school records show his date of birth as January 7, 1911 but his friend, consulting the city records, discovered that actual date was February 13, 1911, which is the official one used for all ceremonies and celebrations.

Parents

Faiz was inspired by his father, Sultan Mohammad Khan, an intelligent and ambitious man. Despite growing up in poverty as a shepherd, Faiz's father had dreamed of becoming educated. He enrolled in school on his own and one teacher, recognizing his drive and ability, taught him Urdu, Arabic, Persian and English. He moved to Lahore for further studies and after meeting up with an Afghani counselor went to Afghanistan as a teacher of English. That Afghan counselor introduced him to Ameer Abdur Rehman, the head of the Afghani government. He was offered a job in the court in Kabul as a translator of English and Persian. During that time he met Abdur Rehman's niece who became his first wife. Sultan Mohammad was also fortunate to have met Dr. Lillias Hamilton from England, who warned him that people in the court were jealous of him and that there was a conspiracy to hurt him, so he returned to India. When he arrived back in Lahore he was arrested and jailed by the British government. Even in that difficult situation Dr. Lillias Hamilton helped him move to England. Sultan Mohammad Khan studied law in England and practised it after his return to India. He was quite a ladies' man, marrying many times. Faiz Ahmed was his son from his last wife. Faiz was close to his mother and strongly identified with her kind, caring and compassionate ways. Faiz had in his personality the best of both of his parents.

Education

Faiz studied Urdu, Persian and Arabic as a child from teachers like Maulvi Ibraheem Sialkoti and Maulvi Meer Hasan, who had also taught Mohammad Iqbal. After passing his Matriculation examination from Scotch Mission High School in the first division in 1927, and receiving an FA from Murray College in 1929, he moved to Lahore. He

took a reference letter from famous poet Mohammad Iqbal, who was his father's friend, to give to Qazi Fazl-ul-haq, one of the professors of Government College Lahore. Faiz always held Iqbal in high esteem, in spite of their ideological differences.

In the 1930s Faiz studied for his M.A. in English and in Arabic language and literature. While he was still a student, his father died unexpectedly. Upon receiving the news, he wrote to his friend Sher Mohammad, "Your Faiz has become an orphan." He felt sad not only because he lost his father, but also for the loss of his financial independence. He had to sell his land to pay his father's debts. Finances were so tight that he applied for a scholarship and also worked at night to buy books and pay his college fees.

Writing Poetry

Faiz started writing poetry when he was quite young. He won first prize in a poetry competition in school. He started writing seriously when he was a student at Government College Lahore. He took part in a student *mushaira* (poetry recital) presided over by the respected Urdu writer Pitras Bukhari, who admired his poem and encouraged him to write more. Pitras Bukhari held regular writers' meetings at his house where all the prominent writers of that time like Abdul Majeed Salik, Imtiaz Ali Taj, Dr. M. D. Taseer, Sufi Tabassum, Chiragh Hasan Hasrat, and many more would gather. Faiz attended the meetings and learned from those great minds. He always mentioned the names of Pitras Bukhari and Sufi Tabassum as his teachers.

Falling in Love

As a young man, Faiz fell in love with a girl from a poor family. When his beloved married another man, Faiz was

broken hearted but his broken heart became his muse. He transformed his pain into poetry.

Becoming A Teacher

After finishing his Masters in English and Arabic literature, Faiz became a lecturer for five years at the M. A. O. College in Amritsar. That was a significant period in his life as he was introduced to Marxism as well as Alys Katherine George, who later became his wife. During his stay in Amritsar he met scholars like Dr. Taseer, Dr. Rasheed Jahan, and Sahibzada Mehmood-ul-Zafar with whom he enjoyed intellectually stimulating dialogues about literature, art and politics. He then moved back to Lahore and taught English at the Hailey College of Commerce.

Involvement with the Progressive Writers Movement

In Amritsar Faiz met Sajjad Zaheer, founder of the Progressive Writers' Movement. He was introduced to Sajjad Zaheer by Rasheed Jahan and Sahibzada Mehmood-ul-Zafar. Faiz, who was very shy, remained quiet during most of the meetings. At the suggestion of Rasheed Jahan, Faiz read the Communist Manifesto which greatly affected his thinking and helped him understand social and political dynamics. Such thinking also affected his poetry. Faiz joined the Progressive Writers' Movement and in January 1936 went with Sajjad Zaheer, Rasheed Jahan and Mehmood-ul-Zafar to lay the foundation of the Punjab Chapter of the Progressive Writers' Movement. He represented Punjab at the national Progressive Writers' Conference in Lucknow where he met leading progressive writers like Munshi Prem Chand, Josh Maleehabadi, Hasrat Mohani and Maulvi Abdul Haq. These writers were trying to use literature to change social conditions so that the

masses could support each other in the creation of a just and peaceful world. This group of writers believed in a strong bond between life and literature.

Becoming an Editor

During his stay in Amritsar Faiz became the editor of the magazine *Adb-e-Lateef*. A leading magazine of that era, it encouraged new writers to share their creations and receive critical feedback. That magazine focused on promoting discussions about literature and setting the stage for new trends, and Faiz played an active role. Alongside his work as editor, Faiz also wrote a series of radio plays that were broadcast by All India Radio. In those plays Faiz focused on social and political issues to raise the social consciousness of his community and create a meaningful dialogue between life and literature.

Dream of Higher Education

After achieving his M.A. in English and Arabic literature, Faiz dreamed of going to England for higher education. In 1939, he was accepted by Cambridge University, but with ticket in hand and suitcase packed for the voyage on an Italian ship, his plans were thwarted. The Second World War had begun.

Marrying Alys George

Alys George was an enlightened woman who had come to India from England to visit her sister, who was married to Dr. Taseer, the principal of M. A. O. College, where Faiz worked as a lecturer. When Alys and Faiz met, they were impressed by each other and began to engage in passionate dialogues about life. As their relationship became more intimate, they decided to get married. Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah performed the *nikah*

ceremony according to Islamic tradition and Alys received a new Muslim name, Kulsoom. To marry her beloved Faiz, Alys agreed to accept all Muslim traditions except wearing a veil, a burqa. Faiz and Alys had two daughters, Saleema, born in 1943 and Moneeza, born in 1945. Faiz was fortunate to have an educated and independent Western wife as she looked after their daughters while he was imprisoned, which might have been more difficult if she had been a traditional Eastern wife.

Joining the British Army

During the Second World War, Faiz was very concerned about the international situation. Many Indian writers and intellectuals were against this war. But when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the whole scenario changed and some Indian scholars, including Faiz, thought they should join the British Army to fight fascism. Faiz joined the army's Public Relations Department. While some progressive writers supported his decision to join the army, there were others who were critical of that move.

Literary Involvements

While Faiz was serving in the army in Delhi, he was also involved in his literary activities. He attended meetings where progressive writers engaged in passionate debates about the role of literature in social change. On one occasion when he arrived at the meeting in uniform, his progressive friends were appalled, but he reassured them in a serious and compelling speech. He never got involved in sentimental arguments. Everybody respected his commitment to his ideas and his ideals.

First Collection of Poetry *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*

When Faiz's first collection of poems was published, it created a stir in literary circles. It was a fresh and unique voice in Urdu poetry, a creative synthesis of romance and revolution. The collection became so popular that in a couple of years a second edition had to be published.

Back to Lahore

When the war ended, Faiz returned from Delhi to Lahore. In 1946, Mian Iftikhar-ud-din offered him the position of editor of the leading English newspaper, *The Pakistan Times*. For Faiz it was his entry into the world of journalism and the beginning of a new chapter of his life.

Faiz, the Editor

When Faiz started with *The Pakistan Times*, conditions were ripe for new trends and new points of view. Faiz brought new insights and new perspectives and trained many young writers to become serious journalists. Because of his ideological and literary commitment, he had a vision that others lacked. He soon became one of the trend setters and philosophical leaders of his time. Faiz was involved with that newspaper for nearly a decade. As a participant in the All India Muslim Newspapers Editors Conference, he impressed many journalists with his personality and philosophy.

Faiz Under Arrest

Faiz was once arrested by the police and taken to the local Deputy Commissioner's court. It was a shock for him. Nevertheless, when the Deputy Commissioner granted bail, Faiz refused it. Mehmood Ali Qasoori came rushing to bail him out, but Faiz insisted that he did not need it as he had not committed any crime. Finally the Deputy Commissioner

released him, and Faiz wrote an editorial based on that incident, for the first time with his signature.

Involvement with Trade Unions

Alongside Faiz's involvement with journalism, he also had a keen interest in the world of trade unions. It started with his participation in the journalists' union and then his involvement extended to the workers' union. At one stage he became the president of the postal workers' union and was known and respected by postmen all over the country. In 1948 he attended an International Workers' Conference in San Francisco, at which he represented Pakistani workers.

World Peace Movement

After the Second World War and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the progressive forces of the world joined hands to create a peaceful world. Faiz joined the movement and when the Soviet Union asked all the countries to create a Peace Chapter, Faiz became the president of the Pakistani chapter and was later awarded the Lenin Peace Prize.

Faiz and Freedom

When Pakistan came into existence, Faiz was actively involved in literature, journalism and politics. It was then that he wrote his famous poem 'The Morning of Freedom'. In that poem Faiz expressed his philosophy that real freedom was more than legal and constitutional freedom, it involved the liberation of working class people. He believed that freedom was incomplete until it was married to justice. Writers from both the left and the right criticized him. However, Faiz was a realistic man who unlike others, did not get carried away by sentiment. It is interesting that

with the passage of time Faiz's poem became increasingly popular and meaningful. That poem reflects his intuition and his wisdom.

Rawalpindi Conspiracy

On March 9th, 1951, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaqat Ali Khan, announced on Radio Pakistan that the government had arrested as threats to Pakistani security, a number of people involved in a conspiracy against Pakistan. Those arrested included Major General Akbar Khan, Brigadier M. A. Lateef and the editor of *The Pakistan Times* Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The National Assembly passed the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Act on March 31st, 1951 and tribunal of three judges was appointed to investigate the case. People have differing views on the case, but it is clear that Faiz knew and socialized with Major General Akbar Khan and his wife. Akbar Khan, alongside his army colleagues, had made a plan, but never acted on it. All those arrested pleaded not guilty.

Faiz in Prison

Faiz was in prison for nearly four years. The details of his life during that time were reflected in his letters to his wife Alys, which were later published. It is inspiring that Faiz, rather than feeling depressed and desperate, created poems during that time, which were later published in his collection titled, *Zindan Nama* (Prison Letter). One of the saddest moments for Faiz was when he heard the news that his older brother, who he loved dearly, had passed away. He wrote a beautiful poem in his memory. Faiz was finally released from prison on April 20th, 1955.

Collection of Poems, *Dast-e-Saba*

While Faiz was still in prison, his second collection of poems *Dast-e-Saba* was published. There was a celebration in the prison and his friends joined in his excitement. The publication of that book is considered one of the highlights of 1952 for Pakistani literary life. Faiz dedicated that book to his wife Kulsoom (Alys). In one of his letters Faiz mentioned that people would be curious about the identity of that woman, and would be amused to discover that it was not another lover, but the Muslim name of his wife. Alys enjoyed Faiz's peculiar sense of humour and adventure.

After his release from prison Faiz published the collection of his poems created during those four years of his incarceration. Those poems are a new chapter in prison poetry. They contain new similes and metaphors that reflect his experiences. Faiz's letters and poems became a source of inspiration for many men and women who spent years behind bars, became prisoners of conscience and were punished for their ideas and ideals.

Visiting China

In 1956, Prime Minister of Pakistan Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardi, visited China. A team of sixteen writers led by Faiz, went ahead of the Prime Minster. Faiz wrote some poems about China during his visit.

Visiting India

In 1956 there was an Asian Writers' Conference in Dehli to which Indian writer Malik Raj Anand invited Faiz. During the conference Faiz spoke about Pakistani writers and Pakistani literature. With passage of time Faiz became a leading figure in Pakistani literature and a symbol of progressive writers.

Faiz and Film Making

Following his release from prison, Faiz became active socially and got involved in many new projects, one of them being film making. A. J. Kardar, the son of famous Bollywood director, A. R. Kardar, approached Faiz, and they decided to produce a film based on Faiz's favourite novel Boatman of the Padma, written by Bannerji. The film was called 'Jago Hua Sawera' (Wake Up, It is Morning). The film, shot in East Pakistan, was shown in a film festival, but it never became a box office hit. After that feature film, Faiz produced some documentary films, but he never became very popular or successful in film making.

Attending the Tashkent Conference 1958

Faiz attended the Afro-Asian Conference in 1956, and then a conference in Tashkent in 1958. After that visit, he went to Moscow many times and it became his second home. During his visits he met many famous Russian writers, some of whom were so impressed and inspired by Faiz that they translated his poems into Russian. Dr. Ludmila Vissileva wrote his biography.

Second Imprisonment

While Faiz was still in Russia, he heard the news that Commander in Chief General Ayub Khan declared martial law in Pakistan. Faiz went to London to visit some of his friends on his way to Pakistan. Faiz's friends advised him not to go back but rather to stay longer in London, but he did not want to abandon his writer friends and comrades back home. He wanted to fight for peace and justice in Pakistan. He returned to Pakistan, and the day after Faiz celebrated his daughter's birthday, police came and arrested him. Faiz was initially kept in the Lahore Jail and

then sent to the Red Fort where his father had been imprisoned by the British government a few decades earlier.

Sacrifices for his Ideals

Faiz made many sacrifices for his ideals. After his release from jail, he was offered the Editor-in-Chief position of *The Pakistan Times*, but by that time his friend Mian Iftikhar-ud-din had died and the newspaper had taken over by the government. Faiz knew that if he became the editor he would be expected to support a government of which he did not approve. He turned the offer down and suffered the frustration of losing what would have otherwise been a fulfilling position.

Faiz and the Lahore Arts Council

After withdrawing from journalism Faiz entered the world of culture, becoming the Secretary General of the Lahore Arts Council from 1959 to 1962. Faiz brought new life to the world of fine arts. The National Art Gallery, formerly a barren place, became a meeting point for artists and intellectuals. The Al-Hamra building on Mall Road even today reminds us of Faiz, who brought the writers and scholars of Pakistan together to reflect on their social and political lives and find ways to promote creativity in Pakistan.

Heart Attack

Faiz was under much social and political pressure because of his progressive ideals. He coped as well as he could, but the stress took its toll and in 1962, after his return from East Pakistan, he had a heart attack. He has written a beautiful poem sharing his feelings about that medical crisis.

A Collection of Essays

In 1960 Faiz's collection of essays was published, with a second printing in 1965 due to its popularity. That collection established Faiz as not only an accomplished poet, but also a significant writer of Urdu prose. In that book Faiz shared his views about the dynamic relationship between life and literature.

Faiz and the Lenin Peace Prize

In 1962 Faiz was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, an acknowledgment of his contributions as a poet, philosopher and peace activist. That award made Faiz a well respected international figure and people all over the world wanted to read his poetry. Professor Victor Kiernon translated 39 poems into English and published them as *Poems by Faiz*. It was the first collection published in English.

Stay in London

After receiving the Lenin Peace Prize in Moscow, Faiz flew to London where he lived from 1962 to 1964. During his stay abroad, he traveled to many European countries and also visited Cuba. In those two years Faiz participated in many BBC programs, made speeches and was interviewed on a number of occasions. He wanted to stay abroad longer but he could not resist returning to his homeland.

Becoming A Principal

On his return to Pakistan Faiz became a principal in a private institution, Abdullah Haroon College in Karachi. In that role he inspired many students and teachers, and invited scholars to give lectures. The stature of that college was enhanced by the presence of Faiz.

Pakistan Arts Council, Karachi

From 1964 to 1972 Faiz was Vice President of the Pakistan Arts Council in Karachi. He was a consultant rather than a regular paid employee of the institution. Through his consultations he strove to improve the standards and change the perceptions of art in Pakistan.

Special Issue on Faiz

In 1965, Sahba Luchnavi, editor of a literary magazine *Afkar*, brought out a special issue focusing on the writings and literary contributions and accomplishments of Faiz. That issue was a milestone which helped future writers and research workers achieve an in-depth understanding of Faiz's prose and poetry, life and legacy.

War with India

Faiz was a peace activist, but as noted previously, when Germany attacked England and the Soviet Union, Faiz joined the army and became a Public Relations officer. Similarly in 1965 when war broke out between India and Pakistan, Faiz was asked by the government for his services. Faiz offered his advice but refused to accept a salary, preferring to serve his country as a volunteer. During those 17 days of war many poets wrote passionate patriotic songs but Faiz only wrote *Sipahi Ka Marsia* (A Soldier's Eulogy).

Faiz's Letters

While Faiz was in prison, he exchanged letters with his wife Alys, who later published those letters as *Dear Heart, To Faiz in Prison*. Alys also asked Faiz to translate his letters from English into Urdu and they were published as *Saleebain Meray Dareechay Main* (Crosses in my Window).

In those letters are many pearls of wisdom, the insights of a man dedicated to his philosophy and committed to his ideals.

Another Collection of Poems, *Sar-e-Wadi-e-Sena*

Faiz's collection of poems *Sar-e-Wadi-e-Sena*, published in 1971, focused on the struggles of Palestinians and the Arab-Israeli war. Faiz was distressed by the cycle of violence that was overtaking the world, resulting in the deaths of many innocent men, women and children. Faiz, a peace loving poet, wanted the world to hear his voice of reason. In that book he also shared his views about the anger, resentment and hatred festering in East Pakistan. The anger of the people of East Pakistan finally culminated in the division of the country and the birth of a new country, Bangladesh.

Faiz and the World of Culture

After the tragedy of East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh, West Pakistan became Pakistan and faced new challenges. Faiz once again got involved with cultural activities. Qutrat-ullah Shahab noted that a special club for intellectuals had been established, the name of which was 'I Do Not Agree Club'. In its first meeting Abul Ala Maududi, Shorish Kashmiri, Majeed Nizami, Ghulam Ahmed Pervaiz and many other religious, political and literary scholars participated. At the next meeting Faiz spoke on dissent in art and culture.

After the fall of Dhaka, Faiz was contemplating leaving Pakistan, but when a senior Minister, J. A. Rahim, introduced him to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Bhutto told him that he needed him to help the government in cultural activities. Faiz agreed, and assisted in the establishment of the Pakistan National Arts Council, also becoming its first

chairman. Faiz wanted to emphasize that culture was more than recreational activities it included literary and artistic traditions of diverse Pakistani communities.

Faiz's Visit to Bangladesh

After the creation of Bangladesh, the relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh was in a crisis. There were many hard feelings and unresolved conflicts because of the bloodshed that had taken place. In 1974 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited Bangladesh for the first time, and Faiz was part of the delegation which accompanied him. He later shared his feelings in a special poem in which he says that the gulf of anger and resentment between the two states had become very wide and it would be hard to build a bridge of cooperation and friendship.

Faiz and Punjabi Poetry

After publishing a number of collections of Urdu poems, Faiz published his collection of Punjabi poems titled *Raat di Raat*. He confessed that he felt intimated when he read the folk tradition of Punjabi poetry and the mystic poems of Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, Baba Farid and Sultan Bahu.

The First Book on Faiz

Although a number of books were published by Faiz himself, the first book published about his work was by Ashfaq Hussain, based on his Masters thesis in Urdu Literature written under the supervision of Professor Syed Shah Ali. It was called *Faiz, Aik Jaeza* (Faiz, An Overview). In that book Ashfaq Hussain offered a comprehensive introduction and analysis of Faiz's poetry.

Faiz in Exile

When Zia-ul Haq became military dictator of Pakistan and political conditions deteriorated, Faiz chose to leave the country. He lived a life of exile from 1978 to 1983. Alys wrote, "It was an opportunity for Faiz to write and to work away from the cramping conditions of Pakistan, which under Zia's dictatorship had become impossible. So instead of separation we chose a pleasant exile."

When Faiz left Pakistan he went to Delhi, where Jahwar Lal Nehru University offered him an honorary doctorate and the post of Visiting Professor but it did not work out. According to Professor Mohammad Hassan, the relationship between Pakistan and India was tense and when Faiz asked permission from the Pakistani government to accept these honors, he was told "You are not advised to proceed in this matter further." During his visit to India he was also offered the Iqbal Chair at Calcutta University, but he chose to accept the editorship of *Lotus* and moved to Beirut.

Editing *Lotus* Magazine

During his stay in London, Faiz had corresponded with many Asian, African and Middle Eastern writers and suggested the establishment of a magazine. Finally that dream came true and a magazine called Lotus was started for Afro-Asian writers. Having accepted the position of Editor, Faiz wrote many editorials in English and asked Alys's help to review books. Faiz was emotionally and politically involved with the Palestinian Liberation Movement and became a close friend of Yasser Arafat, the well respected PLO leader. Faiz wrote a number of poems about his experiences in Beirut.

International Writer

With the passage of time Faiz became an international writer and was representing Urdu Literature and Pakistan at many conferences. In 1979 at a conference in Honolulu, Faiz met Naomi Lazard, who was so impressed by him that she translated and published his poems. She wrote, "This century has given us a few great poets whose stance and influence have altered the consciousness of the world; Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vellego, and Ernesto Cardenal in the Western hemisphere; Nazim Hikmet and Yannis Ritsos in the Middle East and Faiz Ahmed Faiz in South Asia."

During his exile Faiz visited Canada more than once, attending conferences and seminars and poetry recitals and inspiring Ashfaq Hussain to publish a magazine, *Urdu International*. That magazine became a bridge for Urdu writers living in Europe, the Middle East and North America.

Death

In 1984 when Faiz returned to Pakistan after his trip to Europe, he was feeling unwell. Although he had quit smoking, he was still having breathing problems. He was treated by doctors in Lahore but he could not recover this time and breathed his last on November 20, 1984.

Although Faiz is physically dead, his poetry and his love live in the hearts of millions of people all over the world. He has become the symbol of the struggle of working class people and is known as a poet of peace from Pakistan. In 2011, his students and admirers are celebrating his 100^{th} birthday all over the world.

Chapter Three

A Dialogue Between Khalid Sohail and Ashfaq Hussain about Faiz

Sohail: Before we focus on Faiz's poetry, personality and philosophy, I would like to share my observation about the people Faiz spent his life with. It seems to me as if people in the East are very sentimental, and have strong emotional reactions to their writers, artists, scholars and philosophers. If they like them, they worship them as gods and if they dislike them, they are ready to stone them to death. We have a number of examples highlighting that phenomenon. Mohammad Iqbal was so admired and adored that they considered him a holy man and wrote rehmat ul lah aleh (peace be upon him) with his name. On the other hand, Saadat Hasan Minto was so disliked that his masterpieces were excluded from the text books. What do you think about such an attitude and how does it relate to Faiz Ahmed Faiz?

Ashfaq: I think the extremist views of Eastern people are related to their social psychology. Being a psychotherapist, you will have a better understanding of its dynamics. I agree with you that Eastern people are very emotional about their poets and writers. Their reactions are more pronounced with living writers. After their deaths, the response becomes more moderate. Iqbal is an exception. His poetry and personality is intimately connected with the psyche of Pakistan and Pakistanis. He had his finger on their pulse, irrespective of whether the pulse is moving

slow or fast, whether the pulse is of a healthy or a sick person.

When we focus on the lives of our great writers, on one hand we see a long line of their admirers and friends, and on the other hand, a long list of critics and enemies. As a nation we lack tolerance. Individually and collectively we like to see only one side of the picture. Since writers are also part of the same community, they share the same attitudes.

If we want to discuss Faiz, we need to understand whether he had extremist views about life and literature or he had a balanced attitude. We also need to appreciate how people react to Faiz.

In my opinion, Faiz was not an extremist in his views and attitudes. It is not just my opinion, others have commented on that too. If we reflect on Faiz's attitude towards classic poetry, we can see that Faiz respected Ghalib, Iqbal, Sauda and other classic Urdu and Persian poets. He even wrote poems inspired by their poetry. Faiz was most impressed by Ghalib.

Alongside classic poets, Faiz was also well informed about his contemporaries like Peblu Neruda. Some people feel that Faiz's poem *mulaqaat* was inspired by him. Alongside Neruda, Faiz also absorbed the influence of Mehmood Darvesh, Nazim Hikmat and other great poets of the 20th century. All these things show us that Faiz had a respectful attitude towards his contemporaries and a balanced attitude towards literature and life. His balanced approach towards literature is also reflected in his prose. When I asked him to write an article for our magazine *Urdu International*, he penned an essay about Josh and Firaq, which was quite a balanced review of their poetry.

Coming back to your comment that Easterners are sentimental people, I can say that Faiz was an exception.

But people's reactions to Faiz have been quite strong and intense. People admire and adore him and there are numerous articles and books written about him that are quite flattering. People who spent time with him were quite inspired and impressed by his personality and I am one of them.

As far as criticism of Faiz, I have read articles by Rasheed Hasan Khan and Maulana Mahir ul Qadri who criticize his use of language and writers like Saleem Ahmed, Saqi Farooqi, Wazir Agha and Anees Nagi who criticize his literary style. In my opinion, people need to read all of these reviews alongside his poetry to make up their own mind. In the last few decades I have seen a positive change. Time is also a big factor that tries to balance things in life.

Sohail: Since we are talking about Faiz's personality, I would like to confess that I never met Faiz but when I read essays written about him in magazines, I find some exaggeration. It seems as if he was an angel or a superman. In those essays it is written that he won everybody's heart, he was always full of love, never angry. He was never jealous, always forgiving. Let me share one example. Let me read you a paragraph from as essay written by Ibrahim Jalees. He wrote, "I met Faiz many times but I never saw him sad or angry. Never. He looked peaceful, and was always loving with young people. People say that all human beings have two sides, the bright loving side and a dark hateful side but I never saw Faiz hateful even for his enemies. He always smiled and asked people how they were. If someone asked me that he wanted to see love, honesty, truth and compassion together, I would ask him to meet Faiz at his earliest opportunity." When I read this

essay I feel as if Faiz was a saint. Since you have met him many times, what are your views?

Ashfaq: If you disagree with Ibrahim Jalees, all I can say is that I wish you had met Faiz. This article is an impressionistic article, in which Ibrahim Jalees shared his sentiments honestly. I did not spend too much time with him but when he visited Toronto a few times before his death, I was fortunate to spend more time with him as the community of Pakistanis and Indians was very small those days. During those visits, I discussed things with him and had a dialogue about different subjects.

Based on those visits all I can share is my impression of his personality. And to be honest my impression is not much different than that of Ibrahim Jalees. Jalees, in his article created a rainbow of his qualities. But I would like to clarify one thing. By saying that he was pleasant and kind and compassionate does not mean that he agreed with everything people said. He had his own opinions and points of view and offered many sacrifices for his ideals.

There were many turns in his life where he stood alone and did not follow the crowd. During the wars between India and Pakistan, he never wrote inflammatory or hateful patriotic songs but he wrote poems like blackout and sipahi ka marsia (eulogy of a soldier) to share his feelings.

He was not a people pleaser who said, 'yes sir' to everything and everyone. If during a serious dialogue someone said that fighting against the injustice of world powers and supporting peaceful movements was a waste of time, he would never agree with him, in spite of his shyness and peaceful personality. He had his own ideals but he

knew how to lead a successful social life which has been a part of our Eastern tradition for centuries.

He was a very cultured man. Even when he disagreed he expressed his views in such a gentle way that his opponents felt disarmed. Since he was a forgiving man, some people present him as a saint.

Let me share a highlight of his life to elaborate further on his personality. It happened in 1971 when there was a war between India and Pakistan. The crisis about Bangladesh and Russian support was also in the background. People asked Faiz to return his Lenin Peace Prize. Some people even threw rocks at his house. When he gave his opinion he did not curse or swear at his enemies but he made himself clear that he cherished that award so much that he would not return it. Since he was a peaceful man, you can call him a saint or a cultured man or a loving man, it all depends upon your point of view and perception.

Let me share one more incident of a Toronto visit that might reflect his personality. It was 1980 and Dr. Abdul Qayyum Lodhi was his host. People were chatting and drinking. Faiz Sahib was sipping his whisky and answering people's questions. That evening people from different walks of life and from different schools of thought had gathered together. One of his Indian admirers, who was from a Hindu family, asked, "Faiz sahib, can you tell us how important is Prem Chand in your Pakistan? How come he is ignored?" Faiz sahib stated that Prem Chand was a great writer, how can he be ignored. While he was talking a political activist interrupted him and said that in Pakistan, where everybody is talking about Islam, how a non-Muslim writer can be respected. You have to keep in mind that it was 1980, Zia-ul-haq had imposed martial law in Pakistan, and Faiz was in exile. Faiz was gentle with the first person

but was firm with the second and asked him whether he thought Maulvi Nazeer Ahmed was given more attention just because he was a Muslim. Then he softened his tone and said that in the textbooks, Prem Chand and Nazeer Ahmed are both included and in literary dialogues both writers are discussed when needed.

Your question had implied that he was a 'yes man', I do not agree with that.

We also have to realize that things seem different from different points of view. Mount Everest will look small from an aerial view. In Pakistan, Prem Chand will not have the same importance as Allama Iqbal because of special social and political influences.

When we talk about people like Faiz, we are talking about those people who had learnt the art of not hurting people's feelings. It is an art that takes a lot of time and hard work to learn. Faiz was not an angel or a saint, but he had learnt many secrets of human relationships which made him a successful and a loving human being.

Sohail: You focused on two aspects of Faiz's personality, a social aspect that was balanced and peaceful and an ideological aspect that was non-compromising. From an ideological point of view, he was very clear about his philosophy. In my earlier question, I was focusing more on the social aspect where he seemed shy and reserved. From his own writings he seemed to be an introvert to me. Even in his own letter that he wrote to Alys from prison he called himself an 'inhibited saint'. Sometimes it seemed to me that because he did not want to hurt other people's feelings, people misunderstood him and perceived him as a wishy washy person.

Ashfaq: Yes, I agree with you. I think one's behaviour is affected by one's social environment. In the West, there is a tradition of open and honest discussions with writers and artists about their personal lives that is unheard of in the East. Faiz was very selective. He intuitively knew what to say and what not to say in certain situations.

Let me share with you one example to highlight my point. During another visit to Toronto In 1981, I discussed with him that I wanted to edit a magazine. I wanted to name it, *Urdu International*. In the beginning, he did not agree with the name and suggested names like Sahba, Saqi, Nigar, Adb-e-Lateef, but when I shared with him that I wanted to provide a platform to international Urdu writers who are living all over the world, he agreed and said, "What is in the name? The main thing is the efforts you are making to promote Urdu and support Urdu writers. He gave in and did not insist. That reflects the flexibility of his character. He was a soft spoken person and a wise man. That is why many people considered him a saint.

Sohail: Do you think he was a shy man?

Ashfaq: Yes, in some ways he was a shy man. He never tried to promote himself. He tried to stay in the background although his admirers wanted to bring him to the front and centre. There were many times he could have come forward but he did not. Let me share one more example. In 1936, when Progressive Writers Movement was being created, he had traveled from Amritsar to Lucknow with Rasheed Jahan and Mehmood-ul-zafar to attend the conference. He shared his views about that meeting in his article about Firaq and Josh, which he wrote for Urdu International. In that article, he shared that at that time, in the meeting in Lucknow, not many people knew him as a

poet so he sat with the audience. A few years later when he met Josh, Josh teasingly said to Faiz, "Why were you so shy in Lucknow. Were you acting like a virgin that does not like mixing with men or were you ashamed to be a poet?" That incidence highlights that Faiz was shy all his life.

Sohail: Faiz was a shy man but he had clear thinking and a unique point of view. Do you think his philosophy made him a good leader?

Ashfaq: I do not think Faiz had any qualities of a leader but circumstances pushed him in that direction and people started looking towards him as a leader. I have to acknowledge that he did not disappoint his followers and admirers.

Before the birth of Pakistan in 1947, I did not see him as a leader. But when he became the editor of the newspaper, *Pakistan Times*, he took the role of an intellectual leader. That was the time he got involved in trade unions and supported the struggle of postal workers.

Sohail: When I read his biographies, I was impressed by the incidences that reflected his leadership qualities. In school his teachers asked him to be the monitor of the class and in the university his professors asked him to deliver a lecture in their absence. Those incidences reflect his serious attitude towards studies and his aptitude to become a teacher.

Ashfaq: It is true that he was recognized in school as well as the university but I would still differ with you and say that he did not have the qualities of a traditional social or political leader. On the other hand his friend, Sajjad Zaheer had those qualities in his personality that Faiz lacked,

although they were part of the same Progressive Movement.

Sohail: Now that you have mentioned the Progressive Movement, what are your views about Faiz's involvement and his contributions to the Movement?

Ashafaq: This question deserves a detailed answer. There are a number of writers, including myself, who have written extensively on this subject. The Progressive Movement was primarily a movement to bring change in the society. It wanted to open new windows in the old forts of literature. It wanted to discover new ways to write, create and express oneself. Unfortunately, it was perceived as an extension of Communism. There is no doubt that Faiz, Sajjad Zaheer and many other progressive writers were influenced by Communism but the movement was far more than a promotion of Communist ideals. Now that a few decades have passed and a lot of water has gone under the bridge we can see the influence of that movement in a more realistic and less sentimental way.

As far as Faiz is concerned, he was influenced and inspired by that movement and considered it a new school of thought. Faiz not only learnt a lot but also contributed a lot to that movement. We cannot talk about it as a bank account and discuss the deposits and withdrawals, but we can say that Faiz was supporting those historical forces that wanted to bring progressive changes in the society. Faiz's unique contribution to that movement was to bring a balance in the movement, especially when it came as a hurricane with strong winds and many writers were blown away by the intensity of the movement. Faiz, because of his personality and philosophy, remained calm and serene and did not lose his balance and by creating masterpieces, made

significant contributions to the movement. Faiz was one of the bright stars of that progressive galaxy.

Sohail: How do you think Faiz's poetry was different than the poetry of his contemporaries?

Ashfaq: Faiz, like Meer, Ghalib and Iqbal, the great Urdu poets, was different than their contemporaries because he was unique. He had a distinct style that was soft and gentle and compassionate, and that is why the graph of his popularity has been rising with time.

Sohail: Can you share a couple of examples to highlight the uniqueness of his poetry?

Ashfaq: We can see his uniqueness even in his first collection of poems, titled *naqsh-e-faryadi*. In one of his poems he writes:

> The tired voice of moonlight
> Sleeping on shady trees

Nobody had heard such a concept and expression in Urdu poetry in 1940s.

Similarly his poem, *raqeeb* (rival) has a unique approach, in which rather than being jealous and angry, he expresses his compassion for his rival, and focuses on the similarities, as both are in love with the same person. That approach was a unique approach that Faiz introduced to Urdu poetry. Faiz redefined the dynamics of the romantic triangle of the lover, the beloved and the rival.

These poems that I mentioned are from his first collection of poems. With the passage of time his uniqueness became more pronounced.

Sohail: While studying reviews on Faiz's poetry I came across those writers who are very critical of the Progressive Movement. Even those critics that feel that many Progressive writers wrote slogans rather than poetry, acknowledge that in Faiz's poetry they find a balance between aesthetics and politics, form and content. He respects literary as well as philosophical values. In that way, his poetry is far more balanced than the poetry created by his contemporaries.

Ashfaq: I agree with your impression. But I want to point out that a poet has to be a poet first and then other things. In the tradition of Urdu poetry, a number of non-poets, who only do versification, has always been more in number than genuine poets, whether they were progressive or not. In my opinion, one of the reasons is that in Urdu poetry, poets are not only writers, they are also performing artists, who recite their poems in front of big crowds in poetry recitals, *mushairas*. These non-poets, versify, like to become famous and get cheap popularity. Many of them joined the Progressive Movement and wrote slogans in the form of poems to become famous. They joined many literary groups and had big fights with each other.

We needed to judge Urdu poetry on literary grounds, accept genuine poetry and discard non-poetry and then discuss genuine poetry on the basis of art for art's sake and art for life's sake. But that did not happen and even half a century later we are discussing poets and non-poets in the same interview.

When we discuss Urdu non-poets who used their poetry for slogans to achieve political aims, we need to keep in mind that Urdu has an urban taste and creates a certain kind of poetry. Faiz had mentioned that Urdu

language could create poets like Ghalib and Iqbal, but could not create a poet like Bulleh Shah who created folk poetry in Punjabi.

We also need to keep in mind that many Progressive poets used to attend the meetings of trade unions to inspire workers and farmers. They wanted to use the language of the common folks, as those workers were not able to understand the sophisticated literary language of Ghalib.

Faiz always had a unique style and attitude towards language and literature. He never wrote poems that could be called slogans.

Sohail: Many Urdu poets who wrote about historical and political events wrote direct poetry, but Faiz, even focusing on those events, did not lose his indirect creative style.

Ashfaq: Both progressive and non-progressive writers have written direct poetry, some of it is good and some not that good. Mao Tse Tung had written in one of his essays that writers should ask themselves who they are writing for. Faiz wrote for sophisticated readers who had a well developed literary taste and also had a philosophical background. That is why Faiz had a unique literary style that is eloquently explained by Gopi Chand Narang in his essay about Faiz's poetry.

But there were incidences when Faiz wrote direct poems. Some of them were written during his stay in Beirut and some to inspire people to change. Two such poems are 'A lullaby for a Palestinian child and *Hum Jeetain Gay* (We Will Win).

I also want to comment that this notion that direct poetry cannot be great poetry is not necessarily true. Iqbal, who was one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, wrote many wonderful poems that were expressions of

direct poetry. They were about historical events in the Muslim world. Similarly, Faiz wrote a number of poems during his stay in the prison, reflecting on his experiences, and although they are direct poems, they are still impressive and inspiring.

Sohail: What role do you think the Progressive Movement played in Faiz's fame and popularity?

Ashfaq: Fame, popularity and greatness have different expectations. Writers have a price to pay and Faiz paid that price at every turn of his life. If joining a movement was the only criterion of greatness, many poets who joined the Peace Movement would have been known as Peace poets, but that is not the case.

Only those poets and writers become great and popular who are deserving of it. If someone gets that in a short cut, they can easily lose it too, the same way someone can lose the air in the balloon with passage of time. If Faiz was not progressive at heart, his association with the Progressive Movement could have harmed him, too.

Let me explain it with an example. When actor, Paul Newman, who is a supporter of the Feminist Movement, was asked whether he had a lover alongside his wife, he said, "When you have a steak at home, you do not need to buy a hamburger in the market." Although he was trying to offer a compliment to his wife, she was quite offended to be called a steak and criticized his anti-feminist comments.

On the other hand, Faiz was genuinely progressive. That is why there was no conflict between Faiz's poetry, personality and philosophy, and the Progressive Movement became an integral part of his identity as well as his popularity.

Sohail: During our earlier dialogues about Faiz you discussed how Faiz's political consciousness affected his poetry. Whether it was the East Pakistan conflict or the plight of Iranian students, the Palestinian issue or the struggle against dictatorship in Pakistan, he expressed his views in his poetry. I sometimes wonder whether his choice to write ghazals, that are more symbolic and metaphorical, rather than nazms, that are more descriptive, was one reason why the political background of those poems did not come to the surface.

Ashfaq: Whether they were ghazals or nazms, Faiz was very economical with words and used similes and metaphors to express himself, which is why many layers or meanings of his poetry are not evident. In nazms, because he gave them titles, the background became more clear. In some poems he added the dates which give us clues to their inspiration. Because Faiz's style is metaphorical, it permits readers to interpret them according to their own taste and understanding, which is a quality of great poetry.

For common readers to enjoy his poetry, they do not need to know the inspiration, but for his critics, it is necessary to be aware of the relevant political background that was instrumental in the creation of those poems. Knowing the context adds new meanings and new layers to the poems.

Sohail: Faiz was imprisoned for a few years. How do you think that experience affected his poetry?

Ashfaq: Maybe if we see how that experience affected his life, we might have a better understanding how it affected his poetry as well. Being in a prison for a long time understandably can be a life altering experience. When you

feel you are being punished for crimes you did not commit, all modes of communication are cut off, and you are the target of ridicule and blame, your life alters and so does your poetry. When we had a Faiz conference in Toronto, Qamar Raees read a wonderful essay focusing on Faiz's prison poetry. There are other scholars who have focused on those prison poems. Many people who go to prison for a long time, become depressed after a while. But Faiz remained optimistic and that optimism was reflected in his poems published in his collections, *Dast-e-Saba* and *Zindan Nama*.

<u>Sohail:</u> Faiz also experienced immigration. How do you think his experiences of traveling in Russia, England, America, Canada and Middle East affected his poetry?

<u>Ashfaq:</u> I think the experiences of immigration and traveling are two different kinds of experiences. Faiz was not a typical immigrant. That is why his poetry was not like poetry of immigrants who came and settled in the West. When we talk about the immigrant Poetry of Urdu we think of Iftikhar Arif, Saqi Farooqi, Zehra Negah in England and all those Urdu poets who came to North America to stay. We cannot include Faiz in that group of poets. His poetry was the poetry of exile and was quite powerful. It is a different discussion whether that exile was forced or self-imposed, it was economic or political. Faiz wrote some wonderful poems, for example *Meray dil, Meray Musafir*, that are part of his exile poetry.

<u>Sohail:</u> What do you think is the total impact of his poems created during his exile?

Ashfaq: Faiz was in exile between 1977 and 1983 and a few months of his last year of life. While there was optimism in his prison poetry, we see undercurrents of some sadness in his exile poetry. But watching the sufferings of Palestinians so closely helped him not go too deep in his own depression. When Faiz's personal exile merges with the collective exile of Palestinians, it gives new metaphors and offers an impressive chapter to Urdu poetry.

Sohail: Faiz was known to have a socialist philosophy. But when we see him in the context of Islamization of Pakistan, there is some confusion. Some perceive him as a believer while others see him as a non-believer. Some even say that he went to his village before his death and led prayers in a local mosque. When people asked him direct questions about his belief system, he was generally evasive. Why do you think he adopted such an attitude?

Ashfaq: I think it was a good approach. Faiz did not like to embroil himself in bitter religious debates. Actually, he did not engage in any heated debates. We need to see that Faiz and Salman Rushdie belong to two different groups of writers.

We also need to know that Faiz expressed himself briefly and metaphorically. He was not in the habit of writing long discourses about anything. There are poems like *Teen Awazain* (Three Voices) in which he shared his secular views more openly. So I do not agree with you that he did not share his philosophy openly. It is important to know that Faiz, unlike Iqbal, did not focus on religious themes. His choice of topics and issues were quite different. But when Faiz interacted with religious people in his social life, he was quite respectful of their beliefs and lifestyles.

There are some writers like Mirza Zafar-ul-Hasan who have focused on the religious aspects of Faiz's life. They wrote about the incidence of leading prayers that you mentioned. They also mentioned that Faiz followed some religious rituals, for example *nikah* with his wife Alys, giving *Azan* in the ears of his newborn grandchildren, and also performing *nikah* ceremony of a couple. I think they are social and cultural aspects of religion, which are different than ideological and philosophical aspects of religion. Since Faiz lived in that culture, he followed some rituals to be part of his community.

On the other hand, Rashid had mentioned in his will that he wanted to be cremated and people could act on his will because he lived in England, a totally different culture. If Rashid lived in Lahore, he would have been buried and people would not have had the courage to act on his will. If you want to see Faiz in the light of Bertrand Russell's philosophy, then you would be disappointed. You need to accept Faiz for who he was, with his unique personality and lifestyle.

Sohail: Let us talk a little bit about Faiz's family life. When Faiz married Alys, mixed marriages were not very common. It was a new tradition. In my opinion, Alys had a great impact on Faiz's life. You have met Alys many times. What impressed you the most of Faiz's relationship with her and how were they different than other couples you know?

Ashfaq: Based on my personal observations, I have no opinion about their intimate relationship because I just met them a few times socially which is not enough interaction to make a meaningful opinion. But based on the interviews and biographies I read I can say that for Alys to come to India, meet Faiz and marry him was a novel experience. It

was Faiz's choice to have a love marriage with Alys and it shows how he did not want to follow the tradition of an arranged marriage. In their marriage I give more credit to Alys as she had to adjust to a new culture and social environment. We also need to acknowledge that Alys was brought up in a more advanced and developed society than India, so she brought some wonderful gifts from the Western culture with her. We see its evidence when Faiz was imprisoned for a few years, she was emotionally and financially independent to look after the children and run a family without him.

When Faiz was imprisoned he was fortunate to have the mental companionship of Alys. He felt relaxed as he was confident that Alys will educate and look after their children. That is one reason he could focus on his literary life and create new metaphors even when he was in jail. If Faiz would have married a conservative, traditional and religious woman from India, she might not have been able to do such a wonderful job of looking after their children as Alys did.

It was also Alys who joined hands with Mirza Zafar-ul-Hasan and published Faiz's letters after asking him to translate them in Urdu. It also shows that Alys was saving those letters as she knew their significance. That collection of letters is a great gift to Urdu literature.

<u>Sohail:</u> Sometimes I feel that many precious creations of many important writers are never saved as they lose them because of their disorganization. As compared to Faiz, Alys seemed to be more organized. She was like his manager. She used to leave him in a room, close the door and ask him not to leave until he finished that project. I think not very many Urdu writers were fortunate to have such spouses.

Ashfaq: You are right. Alys was not only active in saving and promoting his message and his writings in his life, but also after his death. She was the one who played a leading role in the development of the Faiz Foundation.

Alys was not only instrumental in publishing Faiz's biographies but also traveled to different parts of the world to attend Faiz seminars and spread his message. She was also active in establishing the Faiz Museum and starting the tradition of Faiz Maila.

In some of Faiz Seminars, Faiz's daughter, Saleema also joined Alys and played an active role in promoting his message. Saleema also contacted me and encouraged me to publish my book about Faiz. Alys also gets the credit for raising her children in such a way that they are involved with their dad's legacy.

Sohail: Some writers have only one reason to be famous. Faiz had many reasons. Faiz was admired and adored by many artists from different walks of life.

Ashfaq: Famous Urdu writer, Qurat ul Ain Haider stated that we are living in Faiz's era. When a writer becomes the representative of an era then by studying him we are able to study that era. In the last half of a century, we do not see any other poet or writer who became as popular as Faiz.

Some of his admirers were his students in Amritsar and Lahore. There were others who were scholars and intellectuals themselves but they adored Faiz. That list includes, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, Pitras Bokhari and Maulvi Mohammad Shafi.

Alongside being a poet, Faiz was also involved in the world of journalism. When he was in jail, his journalist friends played a vital role in arranging his release.

Newspapers and magazines of that era are full of praises for Faiz and protests for his release.

Faiz was also involved in the trade union movement. He became quite popular and people respected his vision of politics.

Faiz was quite close to artists who were involved in different media. Whether film or drama, poetry or politics, Faiz had his admirers in all forms of creative expression and schools of thought.

Faiz was also close to Progressive and Peace Movements of his time and those involvements helped his popularity. Receiving Lenin Peace Prize was a big boost to his international image.

Since Faiz was creatively and politically involved with the Palestinian Movement, he became a friend of Yasser Arafat, and edited the Afro-Asian magazine, *Lotus*, all these activities kept him in the limelight. His opposition to army generals and dictators made him popular to all those who wanted freedom and democracy in Pakistan. Faiz also played an active role in cultural activities and inspired a wide range of artists in Pakistan.

<u>Sohail:</u> It seems as if he had many qualities alongside being a good poet that made him popular and famous.

<u>Ashfaq:</u> You are right. His circle of friends and admirers is very wide but his circle of critics is also not very small. Since Faiz had a multi-faceted personality and had a wide range of qualities, he had a large number of followers who shared his philosophy of life.

<u>Sohail:</u> Thank you for sharing your views about Faiz's poetry, personality and philosophy.

Ashfaq: I need to thank you and my wife Narjis, who arranged this interview and provided me with an opportunity to share my views about my favorite poet, Faiz.

Chapter Four

Faiz: In Search of Freedom

Khalid Sohail

In his poetry, every poet tries to paint a world of his own. His creations are the reflections of his encounters with life. The greater the poet, the greater the hope that his words will become mirrors in which one can see the glimpses of his inner and outer worlds.

Whenever I read Faiz's poetry, I am always impressed by his style as well as his philosophy. His words, images and metaphors not only capture his personal struggles but also the pains and ecstasies of the millions around him. One of the recurrent themes reiterated in Faiz's poetry is the concept of freedom. Faiz appears to be the traveller on the road to freedom, taking different turns to reach his destination. I will try to highlight different stages of his evolution so that one can get an idea of the complexity of his journey.

Faiz encapsulated the essence of his philosophy in his speech in Moscow while receiving the Lenin Peace Prize. He said:

> 'Other than mentally deranged people and criminals, all of us believe that freedom and peace are essential for the progress and evolution of life. These characteristics in life help children and women to smile, crops to grow in fields, and writers and artists to express themselves freely. Under the conditions of slavery and oppression, all of

these activities are restricted. Freedom is necessary for human beings to live like human beings and to be able to express their qualities of honesty, bravery, love for justice, and many other qualities that differentiate human beings from animals. It might appear that these basic principles would be accepted by all human beings, but unfortunately, that is not so. There has always been a struggle between people who believe in progress and the evolution of human beings, and people who want to prevent progress and evolution. The struggle between people who want humanity to progress and those who want it to regress has been going on for centuries and is even present in our time.'

The process through which Faiz reached these conclusions in life is an interesting one and the milestones of this process can be traced throughout his poetry. But before I focus on Faiz's poetry and share some of his poems, I want to say a few words about the socio-cultural environment and the literary and political struggles of his time because that will help us to appreciate his struggles of his time because that will help us to appreciate his work more fully.

Faiz grew up in India in the early part of the 20th Century in a time when a number of significant ideas and philosophies were surfacing on both personal and social horizons in the world.

In the West, Nietzsche was addressing the issue of personal freedom. His declaration that 'God is Dead' was not only the reflection of his personal beliefs but the belief of many others of his time. He believed that human beings

had reached that stage of maturity that they could free themselves from the chains of religion and stand on their own two feet. Nietzche highlighted that human beings could solve their personal and collective problems without the help of God.

In the East, the political changes in Russia were the expression of an attempt to achieve social freedom. The main focus of attention, as vocalized by initiators of the revolution, was on large groups of people including both the masses and the individual. The Revolution tried to express the equivalence of his people, whether they were villagers, city dwellers, or those of the street, to the kings and tzars living in palaces. The individual was just as significant and important and his needs were not to be taken lightly. It was time to speak out for individual rights and to acquire the social freedom that was so acutely needed.

During the same time period, the First World War had forced the intellectuals to redefine their positions on world affairs. The war had proven that 19th Century solutions had failed to solve the 20th Century problems and so the artists, the philosophers and the politicians were faced with new challenges.

Faiz always believed that the poet played a significant role in the artistic as well as the social evolution of society, hence, it comes as no surprise that, amidst an era of the development of so many new ideas and philosophies, Faiz's poetry reflects this belief that the poet makes a significant contribution to society.

When Faiz reached his young adulthood and arrived at the first step of his artistic and intellectual maturity, he realized that Urdu poetry was predominantly an expression of fantasy life. Poets were far more occupied with the disappointments in their romantic lives than in the social

realities found in the world around them. Faiz introduced social, political and historical awareness in his poetry, a new chapter which eventually became the prologue of a whole new kind of Urdu poetry. Faiz was freeing himself and the people around him from the narrow walls of literary and social traditions. He verbalized a desire to be free from the confinements of a tradition that was long overdue for renovation, in his famous poem 'Do Not Ask...'

> Do not ask me
> For that past love
> When I thought
> You alone illuminated
> This entire world
> And because of you
> The sorrows of life
> Did not matter.
> I thought
> Your beauty gave permanence
> To the colours of spring
> And your eyes were
> The only stars
> In the universe.
> I thought
> If I could only make you mine
> Destiny would, forever, be
> In your hands.
> Now I know
> There are afflictions
> Which have nothing to do with desire
> Raptures
> Which have nothing to do with love.
> On the dark loom of centuries
> Woven into

Silk, damask, and goldcloth
Is the oppressive enigma
Of our lives.
Everywhere-
In the alleys and bazaars,
Human flesh is being sold,
Throbbing between layers of dust,
Bathed in blood.
The furnace of poverty and disease
Disgorges body after,
A rive of gems
But now I know
There are afflictions
Which have nothing to do with desire
Raptures
Which have nothing to do with love.
My love, do not ask me...
(Poem translated by Daud Kamal)

Do Not Ask is a landmark in Faiz's poetry and clearly announces the embarkment of Faiz's journey for new destinations. Faiz was becoming acutely conscious that each person was not as isolated as was previously believed. Rather, each person's life is intricately linked with another person's life in some unique way. Smiles and fears are not an individual phenomenon, but more likely expressions of emotions indicative of community ambitions and disappointments. Faiz wrote, 'The first lesson I learned in that school of thought was that to think of oneself in isolation is impossible as each one of us is intricately linked with other people, even if one could isolate himself from the rest of humanity, it would not be a very fruitful exercise. One person's frustrations and excitements are relatively insignificant as compared to the sufferings and

enjoyments of the whole community.' Faiz's preoccupation with social problems was partly a reflection of his involvement with the Progressive Writers' Movement in India. At that time, a whole group of writers began creating poetry about the poor, the labourers and the oppressed. They wrote quite revolutionary poems on topics that had not been previously discussed in the literary world.

As Faiz grew more aware of social and political processes, he realized that religion and traditions had played a significant role in maintaining oppressed systems. He believed that to make progressive steps in life, old values have to be forfeited. He encouraged intellectual and social changes that would ensure happiness for the common man and woman. Faiz wrote:

> We have to discover a new way of life. We live in a society where the privileged ones have become the oppressors and the religious people support them. We need new scriptures, scriptures that will teach the lesson of revolution rather than that of devotion.

Faiz promoted revolution, and sought out the means of initiating reform in his quest for change. He wanted his people to be free from old systems and unjust values.

Faiz was quite perturbed by the religious leaders who were giving their own interpretations of the scriptures. Those leaders were trying to pacify the common people. The religious leaders wanted people to tolerate oppression without complaint, and in return, they in their ignorance were given false hopes and promises for a better future in the life after death. Faiz was so shocked by what was happening around him that he wrote,

> Hell and Heaven are in our lives. Rewards and punishments are in this world. We will see the Day of Judgement with our own eyes.

Faiz was encouraging the oppressed people to make changes in their own surroundings, a step toward promoting change in their world in their own lifetime.

Faiz's involvement with the Progressive Writer's Movement was his first step towards meeting the goal he had set for himself and others- the goal of freedom-physical freedom and freedom of thought and expression. This involvement produced a certain intensity of emotion which is evident in his poetry. He wrote,

> When I see the flesh of labourers sold in
> the market
> when I see the blood of the poor flowing in
> the streets
> I feel a fire burning in my chest.
> I lose control of my own heart.

Faiz wanted to free himself and others from the chains of the past. He was aware of the restrictions of his environment in each and every aspect of his life. He wrote in protest of the entrapment of the human body, 'Bodies are enslaved emotions chained thoughts are suffocated No one can talk freely.'

Although Faiz was a participant in the Progressive Writers' Movement and shared his goals of peace, justice, and freedom with other writers, yet he was quite different from the other writers in many ways. Faiz had the stamina to reach his goal in spite of all the struggles and hardships, seen as twists and turns along his road. His pursuit of freedom would not be forfeited at any cost. His desire

remained strong. And yet, so many of his colleagues lacked the same perseverance Faiz had demonstrated so many times. Others finally gave up their search for freedom, feeling hopeless, while Faiz pursued his quest, remaining hopeful and optimistic while sticking to the path, as is verbalized in Faiz's writing, 'you shouldn't give up. You shouldn't get scared of sacrifices. One day we will reach our goals. One day we will reach our destination.' Faiz was optimistic about social changes and hopeful that one day the oppressed would see a just society.

Faiz also differed from his contemporaries in that he did not become bitter or resentful as many writers of his time. Faiz did not express anger. He was a man who never sacrificed his aesthetic values on the alter of revolution, but kept a certain balance in his life and his poetry. Other writers only knew the first stage of freedom, the stage of finding freedom from old values and oppressed systems. They were not able to offer any better alternatives. Faiz was a few steps ahead of his contemporaries. He realized that the use of firey emotions and hollow slogans in the attempt to destroy the old lifestyles were not enough to produce lasting changes in society.

I personally feel that one of the reasons why Faiz did not allow himself to be trapped in an aura of anger and bitterness was that he had the ability to transcend that set of emotions which interfered with productivity and creativity as a poet; therefore, he had a more positive and optimistic outlook on life, an integral part of his personality which set him apart from the rest of humanity. I believe that studying Faiz's personality and philosophy helps us to understand his poetry. Faiz had an attitude of a marathon runner. He persevered when others gave up, he maintained a level of hopefulness throughout his journey and he stuck to his quest whatever the cost. Perhaps that is why he

remained so calm and optimistic while travelling the road to freedom. It was the humble aspect of his personality which prevented him from becoming bitter. One of his friends, Sher Mohammed Hamid, described Faiz's personality in these words, 'Faiz was a peaceful person. Even in trying circumstances he remained calm. He was never found to be irritated, complaining, or angry. He always looked tranquil like a calm ocean in spite of storms under the surface. There are not very many people who can achieve such wisdom and greatness in their personalities.'

As Faiz grew older and more mature, his revolutionary intensity mellowed. His concept of freedom broadened. He realized that there should be a reasonable balance between social and individual freedom. One should hope to change individuals at the same time as trying to bring about change in a system, as the two are interlinked. I personally feel that Faiz was a socialist in his mind and a humanist in his heart. That gave a special identity to Faiz's poetry which makes him unique when compared to his contemporaries. He encouraged each and every person around him to realize their potential and to be aware of their personal rights and freedoms which he voiced in the poem, 'Speak'.

Speak...
Speak, your lips are free
Speak, your tongue is still yours
This magnificent body
Is still yours.
Speak, your life is still yours
Look inside the smithy,
Leaping flames, red-hot iron.
Padlocks open their jaws.
Chains disintegrate

Speak, there is little time
But it is enough
Time enough
Before the body perishes
Before the tongue atrophies
Speck, truth still lives
Say what you have to say.
(Poem translated by Daud Kamal)

Faiz was quite in tune with the political changes in his country as well as the other countries of the world. He was in favour of India and Pakistan gaining freedom from the British Empire but when people started to celebrate their freedom without making any significant changes in their social and political systems, Faiz sang out his warning which is reflected in his poem, 'The Morning of Freedom'.

This stained light, this night-bitten dawn,
This is not the dawn we yearned for.
This is not the dawn
Convinced that in the sky's sprawling wilderness
We would one day discover
The ultimate harbour of the stars.
Surely, this shattered boat
Of heart's agony
Will somewhere find a refuge.
Surely, this night's turgid sea,
Sick with disillusionment,
Will breathe its last
On the chaotic passion of young blood,
Seductive, tantalizing loves,
And the thousand and one temptations
On the road.
But more irresistible than all these

Was the lure of the promised morning,
Her lustrous face
Even though all the treasures
Of love and beauty
Were within our grasp.
Ah, the enchanting witchcraft of desire,
The aching rapture of our quest.
They say that darkness
Has been once and for all severed from light.
They say that
The long-dreamt-of goal has finally been achieved.
But who has poisoned the bubbling fountain
Of our tragic joy?
Why does mendacity thrive
And why is percipience crushed?
Nerves like torn fishnets beyond repair.
Eyes no more than pebbles stuck in the mud.
Hearts, dry driftwood, on fire.
Indeed, there is no cure.
For the fatal disease of separation.
No one knows from where
The morning breeze came
And where it went.
The earthen lamp on the windowsill
Shrugs its head in dismay.
The night is as oppressive as ever.
The time for the emancipation
Of enslaved hearts and minds
Has not come as yet.
Continue your epic journey.
This is not your destination.
This is not dawn.

(Poem translated by Daud Kamal, August 1947)

Faiz was also sensitive to the changing political climate of the world. He had a keen interest in the problems of the Middle East. He felt the pain and suffering of the human beings killed in that part of the world. He wrote a number of poems about the Middle East. One of them, 'The Massacre of Beruit' expresses his feelings well.

The Massacre of Beirut
Beirut- the cynosure of this world!
Beirut-Paradise par excellence!
Laughing eyes of children,
Smashed mirrors, diamond-flakes, galaxies.
Illumine the nights of this city.

Beautiful people
Made more maddeningly beautiful by blood-rouge.
Now these radiant faces
Illumine the streets of this city.
And the entire land of Lebanon is one huge festival
Of lights.

Beirut, the cynosure of this world!
Beirut, Paradise par excellence!
Every single destroyed house, every single ruin
Is more magnificent than the legendary palace of
Dara.
Every single fighter is more valiant than Alexander
The great

Every single girl is more alluring than Lyla.
This city is from the beginning of time.
This city will be till the end of time
Beirut, the heart of Lebanon!
Beirut, the cynosure of this world!

Beirut, Paradise par excellence!
(Poem translated by Daud Kamal)

Faiz was aware that the road to freedom is quite complex and tortuous. He knew that hollow slogans were not enough to produce lasting changes. He highlighted that after finding freedom from oppression and unjust systems, we should struggle for a just society, a society in which personal and social freedom maintain a healthy balance. Revolution has to marry evolution to have offsprings of peace and freedom. Faiz struggled for a free and just society at both national and international frontiers. He was also in tune with the historical changes of society and that is why he believed that people struggling for freedom should be patient. He knew that sometimes it takes generations to achieve certain freedoms.

One of the highlights of Faiz's life and poetry was his sense of optimism. That attribute made him very popular and gave inspiration to all the oppressed people of the world. At the end of his life, Faiz seemed like a wise old traveller sitting on the top of a hill watching caravans pass by. He looked at those people and smiled. He was aware of the hardships that they would face before reaching their destination of peace and freedom. He knew that many would give up or feel frustrated and hopeless before the journey was complete. It was for those people that Faiz wrote songs of hope and poems of optimism.

I would like to end my presentation with Faiz's poem, 'Do Not Grieve' which is reassuring, consoling, and encouraging for all of us who cherish and struggle for freedom, and like all of his poetry, the mood of optimism prevails.

Do not grieve
This pain will cease.

Friends will return.
Wounds will heal.

Do not grieve.
Do not grieve
Day will dawn
Night will end.
Clouds will burst.

Do not grieve
Do not grieve.
Times will change
Birds will sing.
Spring will come.
Do not grieve
Do not grieve

(Poem translated by Daud Kamal)

Chapter Five

When Faiz was Imprisoned

Khalid Sohail

When Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a recipient of Lenin Peace Prize, was imprisoned in Pakistan in 1951, he wrote a number of inspiring poems. One of them was:

> If they snatch my ink and pen
> I should not complain
> For I have dipped my fingers
> In the blood of my heart
> I should not complain
> Even if they seal my tongue
> For every ring of my chain
> Is a tongue ready to speak.

During his stay in the prison Faiz also wrote a series of love letters to Alys, who was his British wife. Years later, when his friends insisted on publishing those letters, Faiz translated them in Urdu. In the introduction of the book Faiz stated that although those were personal letters but if one day someone wanted to study *Habsiaat* (Literature of Imprisonment) the lives of political prisoners, those letters might provide some psychological insights in their lives. Being a humanist and a psychotherapist I thought it would be a novel idea to study those letters from a psychological perspective as they might provide us with a few glimpses of the dynamics of not only the personality, politics and philosophy of Faiz Ahmad Faiz but also other socialist poets

and philosophers, reformers and revolutionaries who were sent to jail for their ideals. It has been my observation and experience that psychological studies of revolutionaries are generally overlooked in the socialist literature.

When we study Faiz's nearly one hundred and thirty five letters written during those four years, from June 1951 to April 1955, when he was imprisoned, there are a number of themes that emerge in his writings. When Faiz was in prison it did not take him long to realize that it was not easy to balance his personal and political lives. He realized that a poet was also a husband, a writer was also a father and a socialist leader was also a son. Rather than ignoring those conflicts Faiz spent some time in introspection. He acknowledged that his wife Alys had to shoulder all the family responsibilities on her own. Faiz was lucky that his wife, unlike wives of some other Urdu poets, was not only well educated but also financially and emotionally independent.

There were times Faiz felt guilty that he was not fulfilling his fatherly and husbandly duties. His sense of guilt as a father, husband and son even made him question the moral basis of his idealistic lifestyle. In one of his letters he wonders whether idealism is one form of selfishness.[1] Faiz is not the only socialist leader who struggled with that question. Many other leaders were troubled when they saw their friends and family members suffer because of their ideals and involvement in the revolutionary struggle.

Mandela, who spent quarter of a century in prison, reflecting on the conflict between family and political lives stated, "I wondered, not for the first time whether one was ever justified in neglecting the welfare of one's own family in order to fight for the welfare of others".[2] Many revolutionaries were married to their cause before they married their sweetheart. That is why when Mandela

proposed to Winnie, her father had affectionately warned her, "You are marrying a jail bird." For Alys, like wives of other revolutionary personalities, it was not easy to face the social and political pressures when her husband was separated from her and their children and kept in prison for years.

In one his letters Faiz shared his sense of loss and sadness that he could not see his children grow. He asked Alys to bring them for a visit with her but then realized that spending money on transportation might not be the best way to spend limited funds. In his letters Faiz expressed a lot of faith and confidence in their marriage and admired Alys for being courageous and steadfast.

In the beginning Faiz believed that his stay in the prison might be short and he might be released in a few days or weeks but when weeks turned into months and months into years, he realized that he was facing a long term crisis and tragedy. As a student of human psychology I am well aware that long term tragedies and sufferings are very stressful. Many people who spend extended periods of time in prison have negative and detrimental effects on their personality. They either become sad, depressed even suicidal, or become angry, resentful and bitter. Interestingly enough, Faiz was an exception. He absorbed all the feelings of imprisonment including indifference, boredom, longing and loneliness in his personality and transformed his pains into poems and love letters.

Faiz shared in his letters that on one hand he felt helpless in prison but on the other hand his own sufferings helped him identify with the sufferings of his countrymen[3] especially those women who spend most of their lives at home as if they were under house arrest.[4]

In his letters Faiz highlighted how his time away from his dear ones helped him change his perspective about

life. He realized that the same things that used to irritate him started to amuse him. He could rise above the adversities and develop some insights in life. He could see himself maturing and growing.

While Faiz was in the prison he requested a number of books to read. He was a scholar of Urdu, Arabic and English languages. Other prisoners used to gather around him and Faiz, who was a great teacher, used to give lectures on Ghalib, Shakespeare, even taught Quran to the enthusiasts.

Faiz also developed a keen sense of humor while he was in prison. His letters were full of comical comments. In one letter he mentioned that since the prison was in a desert, people's faces and heads were frequently covered with sand and they looked older than their real lives. He wrote to his sweetheart that sometimes he wondered he might lose his 'sex appeal'[5] and then people would not be able to tease him about flirting with women and there would not be any more scandals. In another letter he jokes about becoming a saint during his imprisonment.

One of the breakthroughs for Faiz was his realization that his prison experience was making him a peaceful person. He quoted his friend and colleague Surjeet Singh who had stated that 'peace comes from within'.[6] Faiz shared with Alys that only that person was at peace whose conscience was clear. Not having a guilty conscience was a significant part of being at peace with oneself. Faiz knew that he was not a criminal and he had not done anything that was illegal, unethical or immoral. [7] He did not care what others, whether politicians or political activists of rival groups, thought of his actions and ideas. He was genuinely, honestly and sincerely dedicated to his ideals.

It is amazing to see how Faiz remained optimistic and full of hope in spite of adversities. He believed that

sooner or later justice will win and the poor and the downtrodden will get their rights. He dreamt of a just and peaceful world and for that world he was ready to sacrifice his health and happiness, even his life. Faiz started believing that happiness was not only his right but also the birth right of all human beings.[8]

Faiz shared his philosophy of human suffering in his letters. He believed that human beings can endure a lot of physical and emotional pain if they give it a meaning and connect it with a cause or an ideal that is worth living for and worth dying for.[9] Faiz's philosophy is not much different than the philosophy of famous psychotherapist Victor Frankl who gave birth to the tradition of Logo-therapy after spending a number of years in Nazi prisons. He also believed that human suffering becomes bearable when it finds a meaning.

Faiz's letters provide us a few glimpses of that remarkable poet who was never intimidated by the powers of kings, dictators or generals. His commitment remained with the poor, the oppressed and the working class people. Faiz gradually became aware that his sufferings, like the sufferings of all humanity, are temporary. He realized that the darker the night of oppression, the brighter will be the dawn of freedom. Night might be long, very long, but morning is worth waiting for.[10]

Faiz's letters from prison are a goldmine. They provide many psychological insights in the psyche of revolutionaries and political prisoners. With passage of time they became a symbol of hope not only for his family, his community and country but also for all of the suffering humanity. No wonder, even after his death, he lives in the hearts of millions of men and women from all walks of life all over the world. Let me end by a stanza from one of

Faiz's poems titled A Prison Evening that is an island of optimism in the sea of pessimism.

> From every corner, dark – green shadows,
> in ripples, come towards me.
> At any moment they may break over me,
> like the waves of pain each time I remember
> The separation from my lover
> This thought keeps consoling me:
> though tyrants may command that lamps be smashed in rooms where lovers are destined to meet, they cannot snuff out the moon, so today, nor tomorrow,
> no tyranny will succeed, no poison of torture make me bitter,
> if just one evening in prison
> can be so strangely sweet,
> If just one moment anywhere on this earth.

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Chapter Six

Faiz, Women and Jealousy

Khalid Sohail

Faiz was a romantic poet, and like many other poets, loved beautiful things and beautiful people, especially women. He was shy and reserved socially, but he was passionate and expressive in his poems. His fascination with women lasted all his life. Some of those women became his muses and inspired him to create his masterpieces.

When Faiz was a child, he was cared for by many women, including his mother and stepmothers, as his father, who was also an incurable romantic, had multiple wives.[1] Being nurtured by many women at an early age must have played a significant role in the development of his own nurturing personality.

When Faiz was a teenager, he fell in love for the first time. He and his beloved adored each other but could not get married because of their traditional, conservative and religious families, where arranged marriages were more prevalent than love marriages. When the family of Faiz's first sweetheart arranged her marriage to a stranger, he was heartbroken. Being a creative person he transformed his pain into poems about love and loneliness. One of those poems is titled 'Loneliness',

> There is someone at the door, dear heart
> Nay, there is none...
> Or might be a wanderer...
> He will go hence, plodding his weary way.

Night is done
And evaporates in the thin air of the starry mist.

In palaces quiver the sleeping lamps
Hanging by their chains of gold.

The solitary paths are sunk in despair
And the unfriendly dust
Has obliterated the footprints.

Fill the cups and drink to the lees
The bitter wine of loneliness.

Lock up your slumberless doors, dear heart!
For, now no one will ever ever come again.
(Translated by Daud Kamal)[2]

When Faiz was in his twenties he was introduced to the Progressive Writers Movement and Marxist literature which raised his social and political consciousness, and he got involved in the freedom movement and the class struggle of the masses. He broadened the scope of his love and began a life-long love affair with his motherland and revolution. While meeting many socialist leaders older than himself, he met a tall charming young English woman Alys George, who was visiting her sister in India. Alys was the sister in law of Faiz's dear friend Dr. Taseer. When Faiz and Alys began to exchange ideas, they became good friends and started dating. Those dates were as much philosophical as romantic. Their courtship lasted several long years as Faiz had to convince his traditional family that he wanted to marry a woman from a different country, culture and religion, who did not speak his mother tongue. Finally the

family agreed on the condition of her becoming a Muslim and having a traditional religious marriage ceremony, a *nikah*. Although Alys was a Communist, she accepted Islam and the Islamic name Kulsoom to be with Faiz. It was a great sacrifice on her behalf as she was an assertive, outspoken feminist. The couple struggled financially and socially as it was a mixed marriage. To integrate into that culture Alys learnt to speak Urdu and wear Indian attire.

Faiz and Alys had two daughters, Saleema and Muneeza. Faiz was a wonderfully nurturing father who played a significant role in their upbringing. Alys had to look after those children and earn a living as a journalist, when Faiz was imprisoned for a few years. During his imprisonment he missed the role of husband and a father and wrote wonderful love letters to Alys.

As Faiz's fame grew and his revolutionary poetry became popular, he was sought out by charming and creative women. Those women not only liked and adored him, they worshiped him. He had a long list of female admirers. There were times when Faiz was walking on the streets of Moscow and women would come running towards him, give him a rose and then, shy and bashful, would run away. Faiz was loved by many women. Some kept it a secret while others, including Alys Faiz, Ludmila Visilva and Begum Sarfaraz Iqbal, shared it in articles and books about him expressing their love and adoration.

Faiz being a kind, caring and loving person, reciprocated their love with love. It seems as though he believed that when you love more than one, love multiplies, it does not divide. Alongside the bright side of love, there was also the dark side of love – jealousy. That jealousy was a double-edged sword that cut into the hearts of his lovers. Alys was jealous of other women who adored

Faiz,[3] and there were jealous husbands who were perturbed by the love that their wives showered on Faiz.

Most of the jealousies were innocent and harmless but at times they became painful and dangerous. One such example was when Faiz visited Moscow. A young journalist Anwar Azeem shared the story of a jealous husband in his essay 'A Night in Moscow'.[4] He wrote,

> 'Snow was falling. It was a mysterious night in Moscow. Our car was moving fast from Ucharina Hotel to Natasha's house. One could see freshly fallen snow on the ground.'
>
> Natasha and Faiz were sitting on the back seat. Her long curly hair was spread on her shoulders. Natasha was mesmerized by Faiz's poetry and personality. Since Faiz was planning to go back home in a few days, Natasha had arranged a party in her house that evening so that Faiz could meet her family, friends and admirers.
>
> On arrival Natasha's husband welcomed his guests graciously. He served food and drinks and took pictures to keep a memory of his Indian and Pakistani guests. We were impressed by Natasha's hospitality. She was an intelligent woman and her brightness was making her face radiant.
>
> After dinner and coffee, when Natasha was traveling in the car to drop us off at the hotel I teased her. It is late at night and snow is falling. Your husband must be a really nice guy to let you come with us.
>
> 'After dropping people off, I will go straight home. He can wait for a while,' she said in a mischievous way, referring to her husband.

Faiz interrupted her and said in his gentle voice, 'Be careful Natasha, your husband will kill you. I saw blood in his eyes'. Natasha laughed and did not take him seriously.

A few days later, Faiz went back home. I was still in Moscow and in touch with Natasha. She told me that one of Faiz's poems had been translated into Russian and it was a beautiful poem.

When I met Natasha she told me that Faiz was a wonderful human being. That is why he was also a wonderful poet.

After a few days I received a surprise call from Natasha's friend. She shared shocking news.

'I cannot believe it,' I said. I reminisced about that mysterious night, about the snowfall and what Faiz had told Natasha. 'Be careful Natasha, your husband will kill you.'

And Natasha's husband had killed his beautiful wife.'

There is no record of Faiz's reaction when he learned that his prophecy had come true. Faiz had seen blood in the eyes of a jealous husband. I am sure he was not the first jealous husband Faiz had encountered in his life. All the women who loved Faiz had to make sacrifices, some more than others.

In the end I would like to share a dialogue that took place between Amrita Pritam, a legendry Punjabi poet and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a legendry Urdu poet that captures the essence of Faiz's romantic encounters with women. She wrote,

'Faiz said, I fell in love for the first time at the age of 18. All my poems of *Naqsh-e-fariadi* are inspired by that love.'

'Why did you not spend your life with her?'

'We were not brave enough. She was married off to a landlord. My second love was Alys, ten years after the first one.'

'She is your wife now.'

'Yes, she is. I think I did the right thing marrying Alys. Any other woman would not have been able to tolerate the hardships and the ups and downs of my life, especially when I was in jail for a few years.'

'Any other love?'

'I used to like a young girl. Then she became a young woman. I adored her but she married a young officer. She got scared of love and the pain associated with it.'

'You have written a poem *Rival*. Is it about her?'

'No, it was about my first love.'

'Any more love affairs?'

'When I was in prison, I was admitted to a hospital. Over there a lady doctor fell in love with me.'

'Does Alys know about all of your love affairs?'

Yes, she does. She is not only my wife, she is also my friend. That is why we could stay together for so long. Love is painful, friendship is peaceful.

After sharing all that, Faiz put his cigarette in the ashtray and became serious. He paused for a while and then said, 'Now I

have decided not to fall in love with any woman ever again. I will make her my friend, provided she was worthy of friendship".[5]

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Chapter Seven

Faiz and Fame

Khalid Sohail

During one of his travels abroad, Faiz Ahmed Faiz was standing on the platform of a train station in Europe. When his train arrived, and he was about to board, a woman came rushing up and asked him for his address. Faiz smiled and said, "Just write Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Pakistan and I will get the letter." That European woman did not realize how popular Faiz was. She did not know that every postman in Pakistan knew Faiz because he had written poems to support their national strike.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz is one of the most popular Urdu poets of the 20^{th} century. When I reflect on the reasons for his fame and popularity from Moscow to New York, from Delhi to Toronto and from Palestine to Paris, the following factors come to mind:

Classical Tradition of Urdu Poetry

Faiz followed the classical tradition of Urdu poetry which made many lovers of Urdu language and literature feel connected with him. The classical tradition is very popular and it is easy for people to remember his poems and couplets. Faiz was influenced by the works of Asadullah Khan Ghalib and Meer Taqi Meer. His poetry is the thematic and literary extension of Ghalib and Meer's poetry which is embedded in the cultural psyche of Urdu speaking people of India and Pakistan.

Sung by Famous Singers.

Because Faiz's poems, ghazals as well as nazms, were composed in the classical style, they were easily sung. So when popular Urdu singers like Noor Jahan and Iqbal Bano sang his poems on radio and television, they became very famous. Although the literacy rate of Pakistan and India is low, people memorized Faiz's poems and recited them at many functions.

Progressive Writers' Movement

When Faiz was still young, the Progressive Writers Movement of India became very active. Faiz was involved in that movement and as it became popular, he also became famous. That organization brought him into contact with the political activist Sajjad Zaheer who became a close friend, and with Alys George, whom he later married. The Progressive Writers' Movement became so popular that it affected Indian writers of other languages as well.

A Respected Teacher

Faiz taught in a college in Amritsar, India prior to 1947 and in Lahore, Pakistan after Partition. Many of his students became well-known writers, artists and intellectuals and they greatly respected Faiz. He was a kind, gentle and compassionate person, with not only a humanist philosophy but also a humanist personality. While there were many angry Communists around him, his affectionate personality was admired and revered.

Four Years in Prison

Faiz had close friends who were committed Communists and who dreamt of revolution in Pakistan. Faiz was a poet, not a political activist, yet he was arrested as part of the

Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case and was accused of plotting to overthrow the government. He was sentenced to four years in prison. During that time he wrote wonderful poems that were published in magazines and newspapers. Although it was a painful time for Faiz and his family, that experience made him even more famous, sometimes infamous.

Knowing Urdu, English, Punjabi, Persian and Arabic

Unlike many other Urdu poets, Faiz was also a scholar of English, Arabic, Persian, and Punjabi. He had received his Masters degrees in English and Arabic languages and literature. Because of his knowledge of English he had become an editor of a well respected English newspaper *The Pakistan Times.* His involvement with the world of journalism added to his fame. Because of his command of other languages he was asked to become an editor of *Lotus,* an Afro-Asian magazine. Through that magazine he became well known to other writers and readers in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Paintings by Famous Artists

Faiz's fame became more widespread when well-known artists like Sadeqain created paintings based on his couplets. Those paintings had political overtones which expressed the sentiments of people struggling for freedom and independence. Faiz gradually became the poet of the oppressed.

Marriage to Alys

While many Urdu poets have arranged marriages and their traditional wives become homemakers, Faiz fell in love with and married a Western woman. Alys George was a writer and an intellectual herself. She was also involved in

politics. Alys not only looked after his children but also acted as his manager and promoted his writings during his life and also after his death.

Meetings with Famous International Personalities

As Faiz became famous and participated in international seminars and conferences, he had opportunities to interact with prominent personalities. He met world renowned writers like Jean Paul Sartre and developed close relationships with political leaders like Yasser Arafat. Such associations helped him to become known outside India and Pakistan. Faiz wrote a number of poems reflecting on the struggles of the oppressed. Many revolutionaries of the world identified with his poetry and included him in their struggles. Faiz was particularly welcomed by the leaders of the Palestinian struggle throughout the world.

Lenin Peace Prize

Faiz became an international personality when he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in Moscow. Because of his socialist ideas he was patronized by the Communist Russian government of the time. After receiving this prize he became well known in Communist countries and his poems were translated into many world languages. Few people know that the Lenin prize was for political rather than literary achievement.

With the passage of time, people everywhere are being introduced to his poetry, personality and politics. He has become one of the symbols of the progressive forces of the world.

Note: This paper was presented at the Faiz Peace Festival in Toronto on June 5th, 2010.

Chapter Eight

Review of Ashfaq Hussain's Biography of Faiz

Baidar Bakht

The five almost undisputed leaders of modern Urdu poetry, chronologically by year their of birth, are N.M. Rashid (1910-1975), Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984), Meeraji (1912-1949), Majeed Amjad (1914-1974) and Akhtarul Iman (1915-1996). Of these poets, only Faiz belonged and remained loyal to the Progressive Writers' Movement until his death. Faiz and Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi (1916-2006) were the last doyens of the Progressive Movement in Pakistan.

Using the model of Sahitya Akademy, the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) also started a series of biographies in 1990, called *Pakistani Adab ke Memar*, literally builders of the literature of Pakistan. For its Urdu series, Sahitya Akademy uses the term *Hindustani Adab ke Memar*, and for its series in English the term 'Makers of Indian literature'. The Pakistani series is different from its counterpart in India mainly in two respects. Firstly, all the biographies published by the PAL are in Urdu, whereas those by the Sahitya Akademy are in the various regional languages of India. The Indian biographies rarely exceed 120 pages. On the other hand, the Pakistani biographies are more extensive, spanning over about 250 pages. The PAL has to date published 84 biographies of literary figures of Pakistan, both living and dead.

Faiz was, and still remains, the most popular Urdu poet on both sides of the border. It is hardly surprising that

the biography of Faiz was among the first to be commissioned by the PAL, who requested Ashfaq Hussain (b.1951) to write it. Ashfaq is a Canadian of Pakistani descent, who immigrated to Canada from Pakistan in 1980. He is a well known and sensitive Urdu poet, with three poetry collections and one book of English translations of his Urdu poetry to his credit,[1] and is also a popular broadcaster, holding the position of Producer in the Asian Television Network, Canada. The decision of the PAL to invite Ashfaq Husain, and not a resident Pakistani, to write the biography of one of Pakistan's most important literary figures is not surprising, if one considers that Ashfaq has written more on the poetry and personality of Faiz than anyone else. The first book ever written on Faiz was by Ashfaq; this book entitled *Faiz Ek Jaeza*[2] (Faiz, a survey) was based on the postgraduate research thesis that he wrote in 1974, under the supervision of Prof. Syed Shah Ali. Ashfaq's next book on Faiz was his seminal compilation of all that has been written on and by Faiz in the West, including North America, and Western and Eastern Europe; this book, entitled Faiz ke maghrabi havale (The western references of Faiz), spread over one thousand pages, was first published in Pakistan in one volume in 1992,[3] and then reproduced in India in two volumes in 1995. The title of Ashfaq's third book on Faiz, Faiz habeeb-e amber-dast[4] (Faiz, the Friend with Fragrant Hands), is taken from a poem by Faiz entitled as *Habeeb-e-Amber Dast* that he wrote on receiving a gift of a bottle of scent from a stranger lady, while he was in prison on charges of treason, discussed later; the lady remained a stranger to Faiz, but it was later found that she lived in a house close to the prison and her name was Mrs. Bhargari.[5]

In 1982, Ashfaq launched from Toronto a quarterly literary magazine *Urdu International*; the editorial board of

which included two Progressive writers, Faiz and Qamar Rais (1932-2009). Ashfaq had many interactions with Faiz since the launch of the magazine until Faiz's death in 1984. His biography of Faiz is based not only on published interviews with Faiz and accounts of his life and works written by others, but also on his personal knowledge of the poet and his associations. I hasten to add that, as discussed later, the words of Faiz about himself were not always reliable. He had a non-confrontational attitude towards life, and often responded to provocative questions by ad hoc statements meant just to avert the question or change the topic.

The first and foremost condition that I have for reading a non-technical book to its end is that, after I have read a few pages, the book should itself urge me to read it to the end. Ashfaq's book on Faiz meets this condition admirably. I first read this book in 2007 in almost one sitting. For this review, when I re-read it, I enjoyed it all over again. The biography of Faiz along with his literary achievements is described in a linear fashion following usually the chronology of events. There are very few asides, and the prose is precise but not cumbersome. The author has provided a reference for every statement made by Faiz or others, a practice not common in Urdu writers. Copious headings and subheadings permit the reader to skip a passage that might not be of interest to him or her. A comprehensive index of names at the end of the book will be of great help to people doing research on Faiz.

After reading the book, I found that there was more to Faiz Ahmed Faiz than meets the eye. He was an incredibly intelligent man, with many extraordinary talents, one of which was administration. Sometimes the glamour of his poetry becomes the veil that obscures all his other achievements. I am reminded of a ghazal verse by Ghalib[6]

(1789-1869), translated in the following, prosaically and with my own interpretation.

> The spectacle itself became the veil, as all glances in intoxication
> Were deflected by the radiance of your face.

Let us reconstruct very briefly the story of Faiz as told by Ashfaq, but without much reference to his poetry, which is already very well known. Faiz Ahmed Khan was born in Sialkot to the third, or perhaps the fifth, wife of Sultan Mohammad Khan in February, 1911. His father, given the task of grazing the cattle, found a way on his own to get an education from the local primary school during the grazing periods. Eventually, Faiz's father received enough education to go to Cambridge and become a barrister. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal (1873-1938), the famous poet of Urdu, was his contemporary in Cambridge. After his father's death, and despite many debts left by him, Faiz managed to get an M.A. in English literature in 1933 and another in Arabic language and literature in 1934, both from Lahore, and soon after which he was hired by the M.A.O. College, Amritsar, as a lecturer in English. In Amritsar, he met the leader of Progressive Writers' Movement, Sajjad Zaheer (1905-1973), was converted to his cause, and also married a young British woman, Alys George. In 1941, he moved to Delhi to join the British Army as a captain, and not only rose to the rank of colonel, but also received the award of MBE (Member of the Order of British Empire), a tribute to his resilience and intelligence. In December 1946, Faiz resigned from the British Army to go to Lahore to become the editor-in-chief of the newly formed daily newspaper Pakistan Times and, within two months of starting from the scratch, had the first issue

released in March 1946, another tribute to his remarkable administrative skills. In March 1951, Faiz, along with Sajjad Zaheer and several officers of the armed forces of Pakistan, was arrested on the charges of treason that became known as the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case. Faiz and the others were released in April 1955. Other Urdu poets, namely Sardar Jafri (1913-2000) and Majrooh Sultanpuri (1920-2000), were also imprisoned for their 'socialist' activities, but their lives were never in danger. But for Faiz, the death penalty, a conceivable reality, gave the metaphors of rope and the gallows a new meaning. During his incarceration and after his release, the popularity of Faiz as poet shot up dramatically, and he became the darling poet of both the media and public at large. After his release from the prison, Faiz traveled to India, China, the UK and Soviet Union. His later artistic activities included making movies. Under the regime of dictator Ayub Khan, he was arrested again as a 'precautionary measure' but was released soon. Under the regime of Ayub Khan, and later during the government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, he was given the responsibility of shaping the artistic and cultural milieu of Pakistan, in which responsibility he excelled, as always. In 1962, he was given the Lenin Peace Award, making him the only person to have been given major awards on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In 1978, he took a self-exile to various countries, including Beirut where he became the editor of the international magazine Lotus. In 1982, he returned to Pakistan, while Gen. Zia was still in power, and died in 1984.

While admiring the immensely readable biography of Faiz written by Ashfaq, I note in the following a few of points of mild dissention and a thing 'never mentioned in the story'.[7]

Sardar Jafri, the de facto leader of the Progressive Writers' Movement after Sajjad Zaheer, is reported to have commented negatively on the charming and very famous poem of Faiz, 'The morning of freedom' written soon after India's Independence in August 1947. Ashfaq quoting a published source notes that Jafri objected to the poem, because the sentiments expressed by the Progressive Faiz were so general that they could have represented the sentiments of the followers of both the Muslim League and Jan Sangh. Ashfaq notes that Jafri, and others, did not understand the soul of the poem; otherwise they would not have made the above comments. I disagree with both Ashfaq and Jafri, if he really made these comments. With Ashfaq, I disagree because the poem of Faiz is not so difficult that it could not be 'understood' by a hyper-intelligent and literate man like Sardar Jafri. And with Jafri, I disagree because a poem, unlike a leaflet from a political party, is a work of art given to many interpretations. The hallmark of excellence of a poem is one in which people on opposite sides of an ideology can still read into it their own sentiments. I suspect that much of Jafri's objections to the poem seem to have been lost in the translation. He told me himself that his main objection to the poem was that Faiz had used sexual deprivation as the main hardship faced by those who were struggling to secure India's freedom from colonial powers, e.g. in translation:

> Starting out those friends
> Found traps on young blood's mysterious highways;
> Allurement called from the land of pleasure,
> Arms beckoned, lips blew a kiss.
> But the face of morning was their heart's desire.[8]

Jafri believed that reference to sexual deprivation trivialized the much severe hardships endured by the fighters for freedom of India.

Faiz is reported to have said, 'After all this reading and training, I might be able to write a verse or two like those by Ghalib. However, I will never be able to write a verse like those of Bulleh Shah (1680-1758) and Waris Shah (1823-1905); they are great poets'.[9] From this statement, I concluded that Faiz regarded Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah to be greater poets than Ghalib. In a personal conversation, Ashfaq told me that Faiz did not regard Ghalib to be the lesser poet; in his defence Ashfaq cited a conversation by Faiz in which he said that he was not satisfied with his own skills in the Punjabi language,[10] thus implying his own inability to write a Punjabi verse like those of Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah. I wonder!

Faiz is known to have made statements in interviews which contradict his own actions or even previous statements. Ashfaq cites one statement in which Faiz says, 'I dislike chatting about myself. When these literary detectives ask me why I write poetry, I say anything that comes to mind, simply to evade their question'.[11] Similarly, when he returned to Pakistan in 1983, he was asked by Asif Farukhi, an important literary figure in Urdu, if his period of exile was over. Faiz replied: 'There was no exile. I left the country of my own accord. No one forced me'.[12] In the past, Faiz himself had admitted that he was in exile. The title of his seventh poetry collection mire dil mire musafir (My heart, my traveller) and its poems are replete with references to self-exile. Perhaps, Ashfaq is being kind to the memory of Faiz when he uses his non-confrontational nature as justification for his contradictory statements.

Being kind to the memory of a person may be an important part of the 'Urdu culture', but when it comes in the way of honest scholarship, it should be avoided. Ashfaq has deliberately avoided noting that Faiz was a bit of a ladies' man. Everyone knew it, even his wife. Once Faiz was recounting how he almost missed being an ICS (India Civil Service) officer by not writing the last paper, whereas his previous papers had gone very well. How did that happen? Someone asked. Before Faiz could reply, his wife Alys interrupted: 'It must've been a girl'.[13]

I am little disappointed that in his biography Ashfaq did not draw from the humorous, self-deprecating and enormously informative article of Zoe Ansari (1925-1991) about his meetings with Faiz in the USSR.[14] Zoe Ansari, who was fluent in Urdu, Farsi and Russian, tells the story of one evening in Ashkabad (Ashgabat), now in Turkmenistan but previously in the USSR, where Faiz, Sajjad Zaheer, Zoe Ansari and others were attending a literary conference. The story of one evening is best told in words of Zoe Ansari, in translation.

'One bewitching young lady asked me if it was ok for her to provide worldly pleasures for Faiz that night. I said, 'Jazakallah (May God reward thee)'. She took the Jazakallah to Faiz and told him quietly not to leave his room that night. I, an eternal fool, forgot about the deal. Sajjad Zaheer and I pressured Faiz to go to the room of Inamur Rehman of Cultural Relations. Faiz wanted to leave, but we wouldn't let him until the sitting was over well past midnight. We all had to catch a plane early next evening. We were surprised to see all geared to go at 5:00 am. I asked why Faiz, a habitual late-riser, was ready so early. His reply 'She came and left after waiting. I could not sleep all night'. He did not utter a word of complaint'.

Sardar Jafri who was not present at that conference, confirmed the incident, obviously heard from secondary sources. He also confirmed that the poem of Faiz Ashkabad ki sham (An evening in Ashkabad) was inspired by the same incident; the poem, translated by Marie-Anne Erki and me, is noted below.

Poured into its golden cup
The red hue of early evening
From the blue horizon of Ashkabad
And after offering its salutations
Presented you the cup
To ask you
To arise this evening
From the decorated bed of your body
And dedicate a sweet message
In the name of someone,
Sitting by the cup.
Perhaps, you agreed
To give your rose lips
As a reward for the someone
Sitting by the cup.
Or perhaps,
You languished
On the decorated bed of your body
Till the lamp of the cup,
Tired of waiting,
Fell asleep.
An evening was ruined
On the blue horizon of Ashkabad.

Notwithstanding my few dissentions, Ashfaq's book is a must read for those who are interested in the history of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu. I hope that one

day this book will be translated in English to reach a much wider audience.

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Chapter Nine

Faiz on Faiz

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

I hate to talk about myself, because it is the occupation of bores. I wish to apologize for using this English word, but since we now seem to use even its derivatives, it should be considered part of everyday Urdu idiom.

Anyway, I was saying that I don't like to talk about myself in the first person singular. Even in my poetry, I have always employed the plural form "we," rather than its singular variation.

Often, when literary detectives ask me why I write, and how, or for what, I say the first thing which comes to me, just to silence their inquiring minds. Sometimes I say, "Well, why don't you read what I write and find the answers?"

However, there are some who refuse to take my innocent prevarications for an answer. As such, the responsibility for what follows is entirely theirs. I cannot think of any one reason why I began to write in the first place. Was it the poetry-conscious atmosphere of my restlessness of youth? Frankly, I do not know.

The first part of *Naqsh-i-Faryadi* consists of poems written between the years 1928-29 and 1934-35, when I was a student. Almost all these verses are a direct consequence of that certain mental and emotional experience which is common at that point of life. But there must have been some external factors also. It was an era constituted by distinct and different currents. Between 1920 and 1930, there prevailed in India an atmosphere of

social and economic detachment, tranquility and emotional upsurge. While serious national and political movements were in full sway, in literature, at least, there was a tendency to have a sort of "good time," instead of facing up to fundamental issues. In poetry, men like Hasrat Mohani, and later, Josh, Hafiz Jullandri and Akhtar Shirani, ran the show, as it were. Syed Sajjad Hyder Yildrim was the major short story writer and criticism was confined to the art for art's sake or art for life's sake debate. The early poems in my first collection date back to those years. I was still very young and discovering the first excitement of love.

However, while we were still trying to make sense of our times, suddenly everything came tumbling down. The depression descended upon the country. One found that high and lusty men one had known in college and looked up to were now reduced to a life of economic uncertainty, looking for work which was not there. The smiles on the faces of children seemed to have vanished and farmers, abandoning their fields, had begun to move to the big cities in search of employment. Women, who used to be confined to four walls of the house, were now on the street. But the external situation notwithstanding, the same kind of lackadaisical poetry continued to be written. One felt the enormous impact of this contradiction and some of the poems in *Naqsh-i-Faryadi* are indicative of the emotional and intellectual confusion of those days. I left college in 1934 and took lectureship at the M.A.O. College, Amritsar, a year later. Here begins a new chapter in my intellectual and emotional life and in the lives of many of my contemporaries. I was reunited with my class-fellow, Sahibzada Mahmood-uz-Zafar and his wife, Rashid Jahan. Those were the years when the Progressive Writers' Movement was founded, and when workers began to organize themselves. It was a time of great creativity and

the opening. I think the first lesson I learnt was that it was impossible to detach oneself from what was happening externally. An individual, no matter how rich and fulfilled emotionally and in intellectual terms, is, after all, only an individual, a small, humble entity of little consequence. What matters is the world outside and the people in it and what happens to them. What is important is the larger human equation of pain and pleasure. As such, internal and external experiences are two sides of the same coin.

My next thirteen or fourteen years were spent in "owning up the sadness of the world outside," then after stints in the army, journalism and trade unions, I spent four years in jail. The two collections *Dast-i-Saba* and *Zindan Nama* are a tribute to my captivity. Confinement, like love, is a fundamental experience. It opens many new windows on the soul. The early sensations of youth return in an intensified form. One's curiosity returns, as does one's sense of wonder as such phenomena as the light of early morning, the fading evening twilight, the sheer blue of the sky, or the gentle touch of the wind. Time and the immediate world become one. What was near appears to have reached into the distance and what one has produced. My first years of captivity were years of wonder and the discovery of this sensibility I have spoken of. My later years were years of intellectual fatigue and boredom with that experience. The two collections contain poems reflecting both states of mind.

After *Zindan Nama*, I spent many years unable to focus my mind on things. I was forced to leave my profession of journalism, went to jail once again and was subjected to the experience of Martial Law. It is all reflected in poems written at the time and later.

This article is translated from Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Dast-i-The-i-Sang.

Chapter Ten

Problems of Cultural Planning in Asia with Special Reference to Pakistan

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

The vast land mass known as Asia encompasses numerous countries and peoples and the cultural patterns specific to different lands do not easily yield to broad generalizations. Thus we have in Asia a number of Socialist States where cultural planning obviously takes on a completely different orientation from other countries operating under a different socio-political organization. Then there are countries operating which have escaped direst organization. Then there are countries which have escaped direct foreign colonial domination or occupation and where the continuity of cultural traditions was not radically subverted by foreign influences. Lastly, there are groups to which my country, Pakistan, belongs who have been only recently liberated after a prolonged era of subjugation. This paper is mainly relevant to the cultural problems of the last group, although some of these problems may be shared in some measure by the other groups as well because dominative western influences have been operative there as well at some stage of their political history.

Culture in the broad sense is commonly defined today as the whole way of life of a given human community. In a more restricted sence it comprises finished or stylized expression of this way of life in various forms of creative and artistic expression. For purposes of convenience these two inter-related aspects may be discussed separately.

In the broader sense, culture in human societies has two main aspects: an external formal aspect and an inner ideological one. The external forms of culture, social or artistic, are basically an organized expression of its inner ideological content. Both are integral components of a given social structure. They are changed or modified as this structure changes and because of this organic link they also promote and influence such changes in their present organism. Cultural problems, therefore, cannot be studied or understood or solved in isolation from social problems, i.e. problems of Asian countries also have to be understood and their solutions found in the light of this larger perspective, in the context of their underlying social problems.

Very broadly speaking, these problems are primarily the problems of arrested growth: they originated primarily from long years of foreign domination and the remnants of a backward, outmoded social structure. This should not require much elaboration. Today's industrialized or economically powerful western countries caught up with various Asian lands between the 16th and 19th centuries. Some among these were fairly developed feudal societies with ancient traditions of advanced feudal culture. Others had yet to progress beyond primitive pastoral tribalism. The social and cultural development of them all was frozen at the point of their political subjugation and remained so until the advent of political independence. The culture of these ancient feudal societies, in spite of much technical and intellectual excellence, was restricted to a small privileged class which rarely intermingled with the parallel unsophisticated folk culture of the general masses. Primitive tribal culture, in spite of its child-like beauty, had little intellectual content. Both feudal and tribal societies living contiguously in the same homelands were constantly

engaged in tribal, racial, religious or other feuds with their tribal and feudal rivals. Foreign colonialist domination accentuated this dual fragmentation, i.e. the division among different tribal and national groups on the one hand and the division among different classes within the same tribal or national group on the other.

One basic cultural problem which faces many of these countries, therefore, is the problem of cultural integration. Vertical integration which means providing a common ideological and national basis for a multiplicity of national cultural patterns and horizontal integration which involves educating and elevating the entire body of the people to the same cultural and intellectual level. Thus, the qualitative political change from colonialism to independence was required to be followed by a similar qualitative change in the social structure left behind by the colonialist era.

Alien imperialist domination of Asian countries was not merly a passive process of pure political supremacy. It was also an active process of social and cultural subversion. It tried on the one hand to kill or destroy whatever was good, progressive, and forward looking in the old feudal or pre-feudal structures by way of arts, skills, customs, manners, humanist values or mental enlightenment. It tried to sustain and perpetuate, on the other, whatever was unwholesome, reactionary, or backward looking ignorance, superstition, servility, and class-exploitation. What was handed back to the newly liberated counties, therefore, was not the original social structure taken over at the point of their subjugation but the perverted and emasculated remnants of this structure. Superimposed on these remnants were cheap, spurious and second-hand imitations of western cultural patterns by way of language, customs, manners, art forms, and ideological values.

This poses a number of other basic cultural problems debris of their shattered national cultures those elements which are basic to national identity, which can be adjusted and adapted to the needs of a more advanced social structure, and which can help to strengthen and promote progressive social values and attitudes. Second, to reject and discard those elements which are relevant to a backward and out-moded social structure, which are either irrelevant or repugnant to a more advanced system of social relationships and which hinder the progress of more rational, enlightened human values and attidudes. Third, to accept and assimilate from imported foreign and western cultures those elements which help to elevate national culture to higher technical, aesthetic and intellectural standards. Fourth, to repudiate those elements among these imports which are deliberately aimed at promoting degeneracy, decadence, and social reaction. Roughly speaking, these problems may be termed problems of new cultural adaptation, assimilation, emancipation, and purification.

In addition to the above, political independence has also given rise to certain new attitudes, subjective as well as social, which also require rectification and reorientation, e.g. the craze for chauvinistic revivalism and the craze for indiscriminate modernism. Thus certain social groups insist that is only the good and valuable element of traditional, cultural and social practice which should be revived and revitalized but also the bad and worthless elements. Conversely, not only the bad and worthless elements of modern western culture must be discarded and repudiated but the useful and progressive elements as well. The baby must be thrown out with the bath water! The motivation of these schools is primarily not cultural but political, i.e. to hamper the progress of rational social awareness and to

confirm the exploiting social awareness and to confirm the exploiting classes in their interests and privileges. Secondly, political and commercial entrepreneurs from the move advanced western countries have sought to fill the cultural vacuum confronting newly liberated countries with a deluge of cultural, or more correctly, anti-cultural trash in the form of debased literature, magazines, music, dances, fashion, etc. which extol and glorify crimes, violence, cynicism, perversion, and profligacy. A good deal of this trash has been indiscriminately under the mistaken notion of modernism.

From this point view some of the major cultural problems of Asian countries, e.g. arrested growth, uneven distribution, internal contradictions, imitativeness, etc. are primarily social problems related to the organization, values, judgments and social practices of a backward social structure. Their solution, therefore, lies outside the domain of a purely cultural endeavour and falls within the domain of political and socio-economic reforms.

II

Notwithstanding what has been said above, it should also be borne in mind that while national culture cannot transcend the limitations of a given social structure it can certainly lag behind it. In other words, while cultural activity cannot go beyond the progressive potentialities of a particular society it can certainly fall short of what is both possible and desirable within the limitations of this society. It can accept or reject attitudes, it can adopt or ignore measures in the cultural field which are conducive to social progress and intellectual enlightenment within its own social framework. This is particularly true of those forms of human culture which are amenable to deliberate planning and conscious promotional effect, e.g. creative skills and

the body of the arts. It is in this context that I would like to speak about the situation in my own country and the problems and solutions that have been, or are being faced and attempted.

In May 1968, the then Government of Pakistan set up a Committee under the chairmanship of the writer of this paper to investigate and report on these problems and what follows are some of the conclusions arrived at by this Committee.

While discussing certain national attitudes inimical to the promotion and development of art and culture it was observed:

> "There is a school of thinking which holds that all cultural activity in general and the performing arts in particular are immoral and anti-religious. The anti-culture, anti-art attitudes fostered by this school mainly derive from the following:

1) Prolonged colonial subjection subverted the native cultural patterns of our old society and the imperialist rulers sought to replace them by their own cultural imports. Everything 'native' by way of culture and the arts was held up to contempt and ridicule and their western counterparts held up as the only models fit for imitation. The resultant disruption of national life and impoverishment of all the national arts robbed large sections of our people, particularly the influential section called 'the Civil Lines', of all love, respect and understanding of their national arts.
2) During the declining years of the Mughal Empire in the sub-continent, as elsewhere in similar historical conditions, the arts were seduced to become handmaids of dissolute courts and instruments of their decadent pleasures. This was particularly true of music and dancing which was encouraged to become the

monopoly of a socially and morally unacceptable class. After the downfall of the Mughals, the moral indignation evoked by these decadent to the class or 'singing girls' were detaching from the social conditions which gave them birth and transferred, in the popular mind, to the arts themselves.

3) Since Independence these anti-art attitudes inherited from the past have been seized upon by certain factions in the country of topical political factions in the country for topical political ends. They first sought to equate all music and dancing with the lewd vulgarizations of these arts by inept professionals. From these premises, it was easy to proceed to the conclusion, it was easy to proceed to the conclusion, as has often been done, that all art is immoral, hence anti-religious, and hence ideologically unacceptable. Any ideological objection that can be brought against any art as such. This obvious platitude is deliberately ignored because the basic motivation of this school is neither moral nor religious but socio-political. This motivation seeks to promote attitudes hostile to all agencies of sensitive feeling and enlightened thought, including scientific research and artistic creation.

4) The generally negative public and official attitudes towards national art and culture have opened the gates for a resolute cultural invasion by western commercial and political agencies. Thus, in the last few years many corrupt and perverted versions of western culture focused on sex, violence, and profligacy, have provided the stable cultural fare for the sophisticated Pakistani boy and girl and the main outlet for his or her natural craving for self-expression.

5) A second fairly influential point in the controversy is that culture and the arts, even thought they may not be

morally undesirable or ideologically reprehensible, are still something of a luxury which only the rich countries can afford. Developing countries, like Pakistan, must put first things first and devote all their resources and industry, and let the harp and the fiddle wait until better days come round, just as the poor would put his daily bread before the pleasures of art.

We are unable to agree with this point of view.

In a developing society, where the paucity of funds hinders all development, education constitutes personal capital and hence counts as basic factor in development. Similarly, culture which represents the awareness of a society of its values, aims, and aspirations provides an important incentive for a national development. Any development efforts which ignore the emotional and spiritual aid provided by a nation's awareness of its own goals and aspirations are bound to engender antagonistic contradictions between the people and the agencies responsible for such development. Cultural activity in a developing nation is in many ways a form of socio-political activity and it is only through this activity that a people's full participation in nation-building efforts can be ensured.

Secondly, the arts are as much a factor in the material process of production as is education. Just as an investment in national education has a direct bearing on national productivity through creating superior skills, an investment in the arts has a direct role in improving the standards and qualities of many forms of industrial production by superior fashioning and designing.

Thirdly, in the world of today, advertising and public relations are no longer regarded as a luxury but an important change in industrial revenues. Nations do their advertising and public relations through cultural exchange, i.e. exchanges of art products and performances.

III

Before the inception of Pakistan there was, understandably, no such entity as a Pakistani nation. Politically, the people of present-day Pakistan (leaving aside some minority groups) were part of the Indian Muslim Community. Ethnically and geographically they were called after the areas they inhabited, i.e. Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Baluchis, Pathans, etc. understandably, therefore, the culture of the new Pakistani nation when it emerged was not a finished, ready-made unified entity. The differences in social development among regions of the country, differences of climate and geographical habitat, ethnic and historical factors and administrative divisions enforced by foreign rulers, all combined to make the culture of the people by foreign rulers, all combined to make the culture of the people of the present-day Pakistan a composite of diversified patterns. Nevertheless, these people in all parts of Pakistan shared a common historical experience as well as those common ethical and cultural mores which originated from the religion they professed. It was this common religion and the sum total of these values and their expression in social life which made the Muslims of the subcontinent emerge as a separate and distinct cultural entity over a long period of history.

There is considerable difference of opinion on how precisely this culture should be defined. There appears to be some agreement, however, that the culture of the people of Pakistan includes everything which has been integrated into the bloodstream of the social and historical life or our people. This conglomeration is principally composed of (a) the religion of Islam which provides the ethical and ideological basis for the people's way of life, (b) the indigenous cultures of different linguistic regions inherited

from their own specific cultural past, and (c) elements of western culture absorbed since the days of British occupation, added to the above are the distinctive cultures of minority groups who form a part of the Pakistan nation.

This raises some debatable issues, e.g. the issues of regional cultures. The basic and characteristic vocabulary of our people's culture, i.e. language, dress, customs, architecture, music, fork arts, etc. has naturally been better preserved in our villages and the countryside of the various regions than in big towns where dominative foreign influences have introduced a cosmopolitanism composed of many elements and characteristics which are not exclusively national. The growth of these folk cultures was arrested at various levels of development with the disintegration of feudal societies, the withdrawal of feudal patronage, and concentration of power, wealth and educational and cultural facilities in the big towns. A reversal of this process of stagnation, therefore, and a revival of this process of stagnation, therefore, and a revival of these regional cultures, the most authentic storehouse of what is distinctively Pakistani, seems obviously called for.

This raises two issues: first, whether such a revival would promote centrifugal tendencies of narrow regionalism and militate against the goals of national integration, and secondly, whether such a revival and the development of regional cultures would yield to some sort of a synthesis on the national plane.

The consensus of the opinions can be summarized as follows:

(a) In as much as all regional cultures are an organic part of the totality of our national culture, love for the part does not preclude, and, in fact, predicates love for the whole. The confusion of thought which continues to plague this subject stems from one

basic fallacy which seeks to counter pose national and regional cultures as antagonistic rivals and thus ostulates that one can or would develop only at the expense of the other. This fallacy can be dispelled by a clear understanding of the obvious fact that just as the country is a geographical union of its constituent regions and the nation is a political union of the people inhabiting these regions, similarly, national culture is an aggregate of these regional cultures plus the unifying bonds of faith and history.

(b) A genuine synthesis of diverse forms of regional cultures into national patterns cannot be brought about by any forcible impositions through a gradual accumulation of affinities and a gradual assimilation of "sympathetic elements into a new compound." This is possible only if "diversity" is not misinterpreted as disunity and the natural process of the growth of diverse elements is not perverted or stifled by an impatience for immediate results.

IV

The problem of national identity also relates to the classical tradition of the arts. And this presents a different set of problems.

(A) Since this tradition, particularly in arts like music and dancing, is much older than the Muslim era, it contains many ingredients unrelated to Muslim social traditions.

(B) Since the Indo-Muslim civilization was not confined to the areas which now form Pakistan, it contains many ingredients which transcend our boundaries and cannot be deemed exclusively Pakistani.

Should this tradition, then, be owed and accepted wholesale or should it be recast into a mold nearer to the heart of a Pakistani? There is considerable difference or opinion over this issue. One school holds that to establish a completely different national and ideological identity it is necessary to discard all these ingredients, and if this is not possible with regard to a particular artistic tradition, it is best to do away with this tradition evolved by Muslim society in the days of their greatest glory, a tradition which represents their main contribution to the cultural history of this subcontinent, we really malign our own history, that we are not justified in taking exception to what our ancestors, in whom we take pride, not only took no exception to but actively sponsored and patronized.

As for territorial limits, it should be obvious that some of the most basic components of our cultural heritage originated and evolved in areas beyond the present geographical boundaries of Pakistan. These include the Urdu language and literature and the whole body of Arabic, Iranian, Central Asian, and various other influences which have been integrated into our cultural tradition.

Lastly, there is the problem of re-valuation our cultural and artistic tradition in the light of contemporary experience, and adjustment of "continuities from the past" with "the demands of the present."

Western societies, after nearly two hundred years of scientific, industrial, and technological advancement, mainly at the expense of the peoples they dominated, have introduced to the world techniques, methodologies, tools, materials, and modes of production unknown before. These advances, in their turn, have induced new habits of thought and cultural expression, thus modifying or eliminating various traditional elements in social or cultural life. In developing newly liberate countries, like Pakistan, this

process had just begun. And along with it have emerged the horns of a dilemma, of tradition versus modernism.

This dilemma has generated three tendencies, one of blind imitativeness of our own past in the name of tradition, the other of blind imitativeness of everything Western in the name of modernism, the third of a tasteless hodge-podge of the two in order to have the best of both worlds.

We are of the opinion that all these attitudes are incorrect, that:

(a) The continuity of tradition does not mean its perpetuation in toto. For instance, the place of our traditional arms, the sword and the spear, is no longer in the battlefield but in the museum. Nevertheless, they should be preserved, loved, and respected as part of our heritage.

(b) The acquisition of scientific, technological, industrial, and intellectual knowledge from the West does not necessitate a negation of our own historic personality.

Therefore:

(c) Those elements of our traditional culture which were only relevant to another set of conditions in the past and have outlived their utility cannot and should not be artificially perpetuated merely on the grounds of sentiment. The sentiment of love and respect alone should be enough.

The application of new techniques in the arts, experimentation with new forms of expression, utilization of new materials, popularization of new artistic concepts should not be discouraged merely because they have originated in the West, provided the artist retains his/her identity as a member of his/her own community.

(e) A living and dynamic culture is one which provides conditions for maximum contribution by national talent for the aesthetic and intellectual enrichment of the community at the highest level of contemporary attainment. Our endeavour should be to create the most favourable conditions for this maximum contribution at appropriate levels.

Note: *This paper, previously unpublished, was presented at an international conference.*

Chapter Eleven

Ideals: Theirs and Ours
Faiz and the All-India Progressive Writers' Association

Ali Madeeh Hashmi

Much has been written about the All India Progressive Writers' Association but there is a dearth of information on the role of Faiz in the formation and subsequent work of this organization. What were the ideological trends that persuaded Faiz to join the movement, define himself as a progressive writer and poet and yet, within a few years, leave the organization, although even today, he is considered one of its leading lights.

The 1930s and 1940s saw the development of Urdu literature and poetry in two directions personified by the 'Anjuman Taraqi Pasand Musannafeen' (the organization denoted in the title) and the 'Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq' both of which significantly influenced Indian (and later Pakistani) literature in the years 1930 to 1950. However, this distinction is somewhat arbitrary since the supporters of the two literary groups did not identify themselves as belonging to this or that group and in spite of heated rhetorical attacks on each other in newspapers and magazines, most members of the two tendencies were close friends and shared literary and poetical tastes.

Faiz played an important role in the formation of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and conversely his involvement shaped his own ideas and works decisively. The All-India Progressive Writers' Association was formed at the first conference of progressive writers in Lucknow in April 1936 which brought together writers who wanted to

highlight the problems of the times through their writing while remaining true to their ideals of patriotism and nationalism. The movement spread rapidly encompassing the varied disciplines of literature, music, theater and cinema. For three decades, the PWA remained an influential social and literary movement, comparable in scope to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Aligarh reformist movement.

Progressive literature arose in different shapes and forms in the Indian subcontinent in Urdu literature. It was already a manifest reality by the early 1920s and it was mostly Urdu authors and poets who took the lead in uniting others under the banner of the PWA. In addition, the initial supporters of the PWA from the fields of literature, drama, poetry, music and cinema wrote mostly in Urdu. The idea of uniting similar minded authors under a single banner was formulated initially by Sajjad Zaheer during his stay in London and Faiz was one of those who helped make it a reality.

We can find a glimpse of the ideology behind the PWA in the works of Indian authors written a few years before its inception. These were towering literary figures whose works had already achieved considerable renown including Prem Chand, considered the founder of 'realist' literature in Urdu and Hindi, India's most renowned poet after Muhammad Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi; and distinguished linguist Maulvi Abdul Haq.

The founders of the PWA considered all progressive trends in all Indian languages to be the source of their inspiration. In his book 'Roshnaai' (which may be considered the 'autobiography' of the PWA), Sajjad Zaheer implies as much.

In October, 1935, upon his return from England, Sajjad Zaheer made contacts with authors in different cities

and states and sent a copy of the initial manifesto for signatures. Detailed preparations were made for the inaugural meeting and invitations were sent out. It was a time of national fervor and the struggle for independence was reaching a crescendo. In addition to the young, many older writers and literary figures were brimming just as full with revolutionary sentiments and were eager to welcome a new world and critique the values and rules of the old. In 1938, at the second annual conference, even Rabindranath Tagore admitted in his address to the assembled delegates that he had erred in his reticence. He stated explicitly that he felt he had committed a mistake by disengaging himself for so long in his meditative practice and exhorted the attendees to base their works on the concerns of the common people while living and engaging with them in day to day life. Such sentiments from this great artist attest to the prevailing mood of the times.

Sajjad Zaheer's invitation was enthusiastically received in most quarters. It probably helped that his recent book *Angaaray*, banned by the British government, had become very popular.[1] Anything forbidden by the government usually received an enthusiastic response from the public and Zaheer's idea of having the signatures of young authors followed by those of Prem Chand, Josh Malihabadi, Maulvi Abdul Haq and the 'Nightingale of India' Sarojini Naidu helped considerably. From Punjab two literature lovers who helped considerably were Mahmood-uz-Zafar and Rasheed Jahan. Though they considered themselves writers, they had abandoned writing a long time ago. Another colleague, Mohammad Deen Taseer, who had helped in the preparation of the original version of the founding document was busy in his teaching activities and in helping his new bride, an English woman (who would later become Faiz's sister in law) adapt and

adjust to her new homeland. He too had given up writing some time back. The main group missing from those contacted about the organization was writers and poets from the Punjab. For this Mahmood-uz-Zafar invited Faiz to help in the 'technical' matters such as finding addresses for authors, writing letters and preparing copies of the manifesto. The fact that Faiz was well versed in Poetry and Literature, that he knew most Punjabi authors and poets well and that he himself was 'to some extent' a poet pleased Mahmood-uz-Zafar no end. He showed Faiz the Manifesto and explained the plans of Sajjad Zaheer and the 'founders' upon which Faiz agreed, whole heartedly, to help in whatever way he could.

It can be said without a doubt that these events had a transformative influence on Faiz's perception of himself as a poet raising his consciousness to a new level and opening new vistas for him in the world of literature. It was proposed that Faiz travel to Lahore with Sajjad Zaheer and consult with Sufi Tabassum which he did and during meetings with many authors and poets, the number of signatures on the manifesto far exceeded Sajaad Zaheer's expectations. Thus authors and poets of the Punjab became the most prominent group within the movement. These included the likes of Faiz himself but also Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Sahir Ludhianvi, Mirza Adeeb, Upendranath Ashk etc.

Faiz's meeting with Sajjad Zaheer was a milestone in his life, the point at which he committed himself forever to progressive ideals and also demonstrated extraordinary organizational abilities. The meeting of these two young authors, Faiz aged 25 and Zaheer's 31, was also the beginning of a life long companionship that persisted through prison terms and physical distances until that day in 1973 when after Zaheer's sudden death from a heart

attack, Faiz tearfully bid farewell to his friend and confidante.

The first conference of the PWA was successful and was attended by delegates from all over India. Faiz was the representative from Punjab and Munshi Prem Chand was chosen as its first President. His inaugural address on the uses and purpose of literature was later termed by Sajjad Zaheer as the best exposition of the purpose of progressive literature written until that time. Faiz was one of those who listened attentively since the address was in Urdu with many references of Iqbal's Persian poetry. Many delegates from other areas of India had only a conversational familiarity with Urdu or Hindi and it was only later, when the address was translated in English, that people understood its true power. As for Faiz, the address served as an inspiration for many of his later essays and editorials and he referred to its influence in many of his poetical works. The manifesto agreed to in Lahore, pointed in two main directions, one political and the other literary. The progressive movement defined itself as a struggle in favor of independence and against British rule and was also termed a guide in building a post independence society free of oppression, exploitation and injustice, a society free of the brutal dictates of capitalism and imperialism. It was accepted that it is the duty of an artist to use all means at their disposal to struggle against such a society and that literature and poetry could be an effective instrument in such a struggle.

It was agreed that existing literature had degenerated into meaningless spirituality while ignoring, accidentally or purposefully, the very real and immediate needs of society. Here the influence of Munshi Prem Chand's inaugural address is apparent who in his prolific career wrote 300 short stories, novels, essays and letters in

a down to earth, easy to read style, avoiding escapist entertainment or a complicated writing style, all the while pointing out the inequalities and injustice in the society around him while living in poverty his entire life. He also pointed out in his inaugural address to the PWA in Lucknow that attaching 'Progressive' to a writer or poet is redundant since a writer or an artist is progressive by nature since if this was not their nature, they would not be a writer at all.

It was stated unequivocally in the manifesto that the true and highest purpose of literature, poetry and all art is to mercilessly criticize debased values and real, unequal, unfair social conditions, however ugly or distasteful they may be while maintaining, to the extent possible, our traditional literary values. This was essential in exposing such conditions, a necessary first step in making change.

To us, today, these admonishments of the progressive manifesto may appear harshly pedantic but in the decade of the 1930s, in the heat of the independence struggle, they served an immediate need and affected many writers deeply.

One of the central ideas of the conference, described repeatedly throughout its many documents was a critical reevaluation of existing literary and aesthetic values, the search for new values based on real, fundamental social issues and a definite trend towards 'realism' exemplified in the slogan 'literature should reflect real life'. It was resolved that striving for a better society and a better future was one of the cornerstones of an artist's life and work. For the participants of the PWA, the principle of 'Literature (and art) is for the people' had assumed primary importance. Later in numerous speeches and works, Faiz referred back to, refined and expanded upon these same ideals.

Thus the founders of the Association linked the prevailing social struggles of the time with literature and art. This resulted in rapid dissemination of its ideas and values. Numerous sub chapters of the PWA sprang up in different areas where progressive ideas and values were vigorously discussed and debated, poetry recitations were held and newspapers and periodicals that published progressive works were widely distributed. These publications were considered especially important by progressive writers for they gained their works wide readership all over India. There were a number of such publications including two from Lahore, *Humayun* and *Adbi Duniya*. The owners of these publications were affluent, open minded and well read patrons of literature and art, in agreement with the principles of the PWA. One, Mian Iftikhar Uddin, would later play an important role in Faiz' life. These publications, which were now noticeably 'left-leaning' published regular pieces by Faiz, Krishan Chander, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Upendranath Ashk etc. 1937 saw the emergence of another publication, *Adab-e-Lateef*, put out by the Punjab section of the PWA and Faiz was immediately appointed to its editorial board. Faiz soon became well acquainted with the intricacies of journalism and demonstrated his considerable intellectual prowess here as well. This led to his other life long love and hence forth, editorial work would remain an important part of his life.

In 1937, saw the sudden departure of two of the founders of the PWA. Mahmood-uz-Zafar accepted an appointment as the secretary of Jawahar Lal Nehru and Rasheed Jahan left with him for Delhi. M.D. Taseer now assumed the responsibilities vacated by Mahmood-uz-Zafar and though Faiz was clearly grieved by the departure of both Mahmood and Rasheed Jahan, it was now no longer

necessary for him to travel back and forth to Lahore since Taseer moved his wife and young son to Amritsar and with it the Punjab section of the PWA.

By 1938, there were three main centers of progressive literature in Lucknow, Hyderabad and Lahore, all with their own active members and publications. The Punjab section of the movement, centered in Lahore was the most active, both in terms of the number of members as well as their activities which included frequent meetings, literature and poetry readings and discussion groups. The association and its ideas were gaining rapidly in popularity fueled, in no small part, by their democratic and egalitarian ideas and their emphasis on keeping their work close to the mass of people. This was evident, not only in their literary works but also in their organizational activities which strove to make their works accessible to ordinary people, most of them illiterate. One such gathering in 1938 underlined this point. It was organized entirely by Faiz and the invitees included Maulvi Abdul Haq, Munshi Prem Chand, Josh Malihabadi, Majaaz, Jaan Nisaar Akhtar, Krishen Chander and Sibte Hasan, among others. Some honorary guests included the chief justice of Lucknow Sir Wazir Hasan, the publisher Mian Iftikharuddin, the Indian freedom fighter and political leader Jayaprakash Narayan and a few leaders of the Muslim League who were likely not very interested in progressive ideas but nevertheless disliked the British. There were several other notables invited as well. Both the conference and the Punjab Kissan Sabha (Peasants' Union) were meeting simultaneously in Amritsar.

Sajjad Zaheer, in *Roshnai* has painted a colorful picture of the meeting. In it he recalls that the Kisaan Sabha was scheduled in Jalianwala Bagh[2] and the PWA decided to hold its meeting there as well. Faiz was the chief

organizer and was milling around with the crowd, smiling, with a bag in his hand. Zaheer was noticeably nervous and asked Faiz how they would ever conduct a literary meeting in this noisy multitude since even after the Kissan Sabha finished their meetings a crowd lingered in the area. Faiz responded that he had asked many local colleges and schools for the loan of a hall but no one had agreed until he asked the peasant leaders who happily agreed to let the PWA use their areas in between sessions. Faiz also felt that it was fortuitous since this meant that the local farmers and peasants could get to see 'their' writers and poets who would get to read their works in the presence of common people. Zaheer was surprised that even MAO College, where Faiz taught and Taseer was the Principal, refused the loan of a hall thereby making clear what they thought about the ideas of the organization.

Zaheer recalls how disturbed he felt at the apparent disorganization of the conference proceedings. How was it possible to have a serious literary discussion under such conditions? He reminded himself though that 'serious' discussions are not all that matters in the end. Middle class intellectuals often feel themselves powerless and weak when faced with societal problems. Would not this feeling of impotence and helplessness be erased if fortified with the strength of the mass of people? Are those same intellectuals not part of the people? Zaheer remembers how it felt a little strange to be reciting literary works while being watched curiously by hundreds of young and old peasants who probably did not understand much of what was being said but could, no doubt, appreciate that these educated people were with them, on their side. They probably wished that things would be written and said that they could comprehend and, no doubt, the writers too, felt that even though they were sitting amongst common

people, they still had work to do in order to get close to them in their work. Once the poetry recitation began, though, it felt more like a celebration and the conference was generally considered a great success and set the trend for subsequent meetings where peasants, students, workers and representatives of poorer sections of society were especially invited.

It should be obvious by now that state and government officials were extremely suspicious of progressives since it was no secret that they were left leaning, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. It is no surprise therefore, that conflict between state officials and progressive groups began immediately upon their founding centered primarily on government efforts to contain and eliminate the ideas and influence of the progressive movement. About 6 months after its inception, the PWA was officially accused of being 'socialist' and 'communist' and government employees were forbidden to participate in any of its activities. This, of course, included a number of poets, writers and artists. In those years of economic depression and rampant unemployment, losing one's government employment meant exposing one's family to poverty and potential starvation. A number of writers and artists, as a consequence had to separate themselves, at least publicly, from the movement. Sufi Tabassum, whose house had been the meeting place and unofficial headquarters for the Punjab section, separated from the movement and finding a place to meet became difficult until a sympathizer offered his studio.

Religious leaders, too, wasted no time coming to the aid of the government and helpfully issues *fatwas* (religious edicts) against progressive writers branding them apostates and heretics.

However, it should be noted that opposition to progressive literature was not confined to government or religious circles. A group of litterateurs (professional writers) also opposed the movement early. The more the progressive movement's popularity spread, the more vehement became their opposition. Progressive writers had identified early who these opponents would be. It is not by accident that the 1936 manifesto differentiated sharply between 'progressive' and 'reactionary' or 'conservative' literature. It stated clearly that all literary work that led to dissension, confrontation and blind imitation was reactionary while work that led to the development of critical faculties including subjecting our own traditions to healthy criticism, that encouraged unity and fostered independence of thought and freedom of spirit is progressive. In contrast to officialdom which worried about the 'socialist leadership' of the movement, conservative writers opposed all ideas within the movement from its poetic works to its political leanings. Sajjad Zaheer summarized their opposition in his autobiography. One of their objections was that progressive writers, by dint of their efforts to make literature accessible to common people were 'debasing' or 'spoiling' the language that somehow, simplicity was devoid of beauty. They also claimed that instead of trying to reform individuals, they were leading them towards revolution and bloody insurrection, that they were propagating irreligious ideas, licentiousness and moral corruption, that their ideas were somehow 'foreign' and alien and were corroding culture and society.

It is hard to believe how similar are the charges leveled against all those who are termed 'the others' or 'enemies' and how these charges are similar across cultures and ages. In this case, the opponents of progressives were

those who rejected literature as a source of reforming society, believed in 'art for art's sake' and were, in the words of the progressives immersed in 'blind imitation', in this case, of Western literature and poetry.

Their organization, formed in 1939 as a reaction to the PWA, was named the 'Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq' and consisted primarily of two young poets who believed in 'experimental' literature, N.M.Rashid and Meeraji. Their differences with progressives centered on a clash of ideology, their points of view about the problems of life and their opinions about how such problems ought to be portrayed in literature.

Rashid described it once in some detail. He was of the view that the progressives, proceeding from a predetermined ideological point of view wanted to deprive artists of their independence of thought whereas, he maintained, an artist, especially a poet, if he or she is true to their art should only use his or her own impressions of the world for their creations. He asserted that his poetry was a reflection only of his own considered, deep beliefs, not of some external influence imposed by others. He criticized progressives for examining life through a single lens while his world view was informed only by his own experience and his own reflections.

By 'pre-determined point of view', Rashid meant the Marxist leanings of many leading lights of the PWA as well as the emphasis on social criticism and the striving for social change agreed to in the 1936 manifesto. Members of the 'Halqa' forcefully rejected all appeals and ideas of the PWA and raised the banner of their complete freedom from all such ideas. They declared themselves in search of their own aesthetic and artistic values independent of any 'external' influences. They were particularly impressed by

Western poetry, aesthetics and philosophy and this is evident in their works.

The members of the 'Halqa' were interested mainly in the psychic workings of individual minds, the covert motivations of human behavior and the particular circumstances facing individuals. They approached other subjects from the same point of view and occasionally addressed political and social problems though always within the confines of individual experience. Their poetry was inspired by modernist Western works with a heavy emphasis on traditionalism. They were particularly enamored of the conflict between any one person's desires and fears and the dictates of society and morality. Their poetry was an ode to the alienation and disaffection of Man trapped and alone in a hostile society. Artists in Western countries blamed the philosophical and spiritual bankruptcy of the West on the rule of technocrats (instead of artists) and similarly fixed responsibility for the backwardness and ignorance of the East on thwarted desires and ideals and a loss of traditional values. Members of the 'Halqa' agreed with this point of view.

The PWA immediately declared the 'Halqa' 'reactionaries' and their works 'modernist'. The word 'modernist' had only recently assumed an 'anti-left' meaning indicating, in the works of all 'left' writers and artists, all that was wrongheaded in literature and art. Only recently has this word reclaimed its true meaning 'new-ness' meaning modernity without any ideological taint.

Members of the 'Halqa' consistently criticized the PWA and declared its works 'propaganda' and 'slogans in the guise of poetry'. Applied to the works of some of the younger members of the PWA, this was not far from the truth.

The war of words, accusations and counter accusations, insults and barbs traded in the pages of newspapers and magazines continued for several years and though the passage of time and the force of contemporary poetry has long ago swept the distinctions before it, the echoes of that fight between 'progressives' and 'reactionaries' are still with us.

Once again, the point of view of the progressives was articulated by Sajjad Zaheer who pointed out that those who believed in 'Art for Art's sake' had few followers amongst the general public and usually inclined towards the reactionary ideas of Western Literature. In his description, progressives believe in only that art (including literature and poetry) which encourages in all its readers a passion for life, courage in adversity and love for all humanity. Such works should nurture a person's individual and social striving and help them see both their inner and outer worlds more clearly. Works of art and literature which confuse the mind and breed within it despair and futility are unacceptable, he continued. Any work that clouds one's understanding of self and the world , that leads the psyche towards self absorption and breeds ignorance, selfishness and cowardice, which deprives someone of their humanity and, as a consequence, breeds hatred for all humanity, that hardens hearts and saps compassion is unacceptable, to be rejected entirely.

It is not possible to examine the works of members of the 'Halqa' in detail here. However, it can be safely said that they did play a significant role in elevating Urdu poetry to a new level. Where the progressives broadened the subjective horizons of poetry and literature immeasurably, members of the 'Halqa' took the technical aspects of Urdu poetry in new directions. In the past, Urdu poems had usually followed a fairly standard format where

the title of the poem was a good descriptor of the subject allowing the reader to guess with a good deal of accuracy where the poem's subject was headed.

N.M. Rashid and Meeraji,[3] influenced by Western poets, attempted and, to some extent, succeeded, in turning Urdu poetry in an entirely new direction. In place of traditional rhyme and meter, they adopted the 'free verse' style signaling a radical departure from established Urdu poetry and a trend towards an 'inward looking', westernized style. Unlike progressive works, their creations included themes, word formations, and verse groupings which were entirely novel and, as a result, accessible and enjoyable only by a select, usually western educated, audience. In addition, their works were first experiments in the Western 'stream of consciousness' style, a narrative mode that seeks to portray an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes.

In contrast, the poems of Faiz were read and recited widely, memorized and quoted. In particular the one titled *Bol* (Speak) from his first published collection *Naqsh-e-Faryaadi* (1941) was especially popular and in some ways may be considered the poetical 'motto' of his entire life, written immediately upon his return from the Lucknow conference in 1936. In it, Faiz has captured beautifully the longing of an oppressed people ready at last to face their British rulers in a fight to the end.

The above discussion should not be taken to mean though that progressive artists paid no attention to the arrangement or composition of words and phrases or that members of the 'Halqa' ignored subject and meaning. However, Halqa members admitted that they preferred to experiment with existing forms while progressives, though always in search of new subjects and new ideas, preferred

to stay within the confines of existing literary rules. Sajjad Zaheer himself attested to this when he called poetry a fundamental form of human expression which could never be entirely confined to existing rules.

Thus it was evident from the beginning that in spite of frequent and sometimes bitter arguments, there was more in common between the two groups than either was, perhaps, willing to admit. This was particularly true of the more talented members, especially Faiz. It was also true that both camps published their works in each others' periodicals. *Adab-e-Lateef* was the main magazine publishing progressive works and with time became the 'flag ship' of the PWA. Halqa members published their works in *Adabi Duniya*, edited by Meeraji which usually confined itself to publishing poetry rather then polemics about literature.

The poets and authors themselves were usually cordial and friendly towards each other though they disagreed on many topics. Faiz once described his dislike for the subjects which were the basis of the works of the 'Halqa' members. He pointed to 'the cruelty of nature and the wailing of the children of the poor', the 'oppression of society and the rising tide of the independence struggle'. How, he asked, could they (meaning members of the Halqa) ignore these concrete realities and close their eyes to such cruelties. He lamented that these artists termed writing about these unpleasant realities 'propaganda' and refused to consider them art. Of course, he continued, the worship of beauty is a worthwhile endeavor but endeavoring to create a beautiful society is more worthwhile still. How can one sing praises to the beauty and fragrance of the rose while ignoring entirely the careworn hands and wretched poverty of the gardener who had brought this rose to life?

It should also be pointed out that members of the Halqa not only admired Faiz's poetry but published it regularly in their journal 'Adabi Duniya' although N.M. Rashid once commented with biting criticism that he did not believe that literature required a 'music director' or adherence to a certain set of beliefs. He refused to consider his art subservient to what he considered 'a group of people with pre-determined ideas intent on imposing their beliefs on me'.

This conflict was never about creative endeavors. Both groups admired the others' works and even helped at times. Thus, the unofficial leader of the 'modernists', NM Rashid wrote the foreword to Faiz's first published collection and dedicated his collection *Mavra* to his friend and ideological rival. The foreword to *Mavra* was written by none other than the leader of the Punjab section of the PWA, Krishen Chander. Upendranath Ashk, another stalwart of the PWA, dedicated one of his short stories to Rashid.

Faiz, as a progressive, paid little heed to traditions and rules. As we have seen, during the 1938 conference, Faiz was completely serene in the face of the chaos of holding the conference amidst a peasant gathering. The noise and disorder between the sessions did not bother Faiz one bit. For him, the presence of the peasants was entirely in line with the founding principles of the PWA of bringing literature to the people. For Faiz, what was important was the work, not the credit. He always differentiated between the 'movement' of which he considered himself a part and the 'organization' towards which he always had a logical and dialectical approach. In his own words, organizations form and fall away but movements continue. He acknowledged the obvious, that the PWA did not invent

progressivism; it merely gave it shape according to the needs of the time.

With the passage of time, differences of opinion arose within the organization. Some artists, chafing against its ideological direction and perceiving it as limiting their creative expression and freedom of thought dissociated themselves from it. Faiz remained aloof from these clashes, he had never paid heed to rules imposed 'from above' anyway. He continued experimenting with different poetic forms, writing verses that painted the world in new and delicately beautiful ways and gathering admirers in droves. He never confined his poetry to 'socially relevant' themes alone though there remained a strong undercurrent of the pain and longing of ordinary people in all his work. He also believed strongly in the union of all democratic, progressive forces, no matter which ideological school they belonged to. He was convinced that only such a united front could roll back the forces of reaction and evil and he believed the PWA to be such a front.

The mission of the PWA became especially complicated after the division of India and the formation of Pakistan. The PWA had come into being as a broad national vanguard with a core political purpose of defeating British Imperialism. It included writers, poets and artists of many political persuasions all of whom were united in their fervent desire for independence. After this was accomplished, the organization, along with the nation, split into its Indian and Pakistani counterparts. Unlike Pakistan which was faced, immediately, with economic ruin and resulting political and social unrest, the situation in India was relatively settled. As a result of Pakistan's dilemma, there was in the organization a difference of opinion about how to proceed on the artistic front. As described above, most of the founders and leaders of the PWA believed in

socialist ideals and were proponents of social change on the model of the former Soviet Union which, at that time, served as a beacon of hope for all colonial and oppressed people. They had adopted the slogan of 'if you are not with us, you are against us' leading many more moderate members to become disillusioned with the organization. In 1948, M.D. Taseer left the organization and published one of his poems in the magazine *Ehsaan* outlining what his feelings were about the organization members (Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi replaced him as the organization's secretary).

Faiz, too, was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the ideological rigidity on display. He began to absent himself from the organization's meetings and grew more taciturn. This did not go unnoticed and led to some vocal criticisms from other members, usually directed at his poetry. In one instance, Ali Sardar Jafri, referring to Faiz's famous 'Subh-e-Azadi' (Dawn of Independence) accused his friend and comrade of ambiguity of thought and evasiveness of meaning going so far as to suggest that the poem reflected the disappointment of those Muslim League leaders who felt betrayed at not having received all the territory they had hoped for in the new country.

Faiz stayed silent. He never responded to personal attacks whether from friend or foe and, in general, refrained from 'protest politics'. He had protested the expulsion from the PWA of a group of young artists who had been branded 'romanticists', to no avail. Many years later he was still regretful that he had not opposed that move more forcefully in the association's meetings and blamed himself for what happened. He recounted what happened years later. He remembered that everyone (in the organization) had a nebulous idea of 'freedom' in their minds but what that would mean in practice, nobody knew,

which led some people to move towards more emotional extremes, leading others who should have remained with the organization, to be marginalized. This led to a restriction of the organization's goals. Faiz was of the considered opinion that the organization should have restricted itself to trying to influence the ideas of the artists, not critiquing their works. In his opinion, this was what led to the loss of great artists like Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai and Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider. It is debatable whether an artist like Haider would have stayed on in the organization even if Faiz's opinion had prevailed given the vocal attacks on her work and person.

Recent books have suggested that Faiz dissociated himself from the organization after just a few years but this is incorrect since even after Pakistan's inception (i.e. more than ten years after the formation of the PWA), Faiz was still involved with what had, by then, become the All Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association, helping in organizing meetings and vigorously defending the association from vicious attacks by Mullahs in the editorial pages of the dailies *Imrooz* and *The Pakistan Times*. He himself described the event that led to him finally distancing himself from the organization. It was at a meeting of the organization at Mazhar Ali Khan's house. Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi read a paper zealously attacking Allama Muhammad Iqbal and his poetry. Faiz, whose father had been a friend and colleague of Iqbal, and who was a great admirer of Iqbal's poetry was saddened and angry. He protested forcefully arguing that this was 'meaningless extremism' but was over ruled. This broke his heart and from then on, he stopped going to the meetings concentrating on running Pakistan Times.

This was Faiz's formal break with the association, though he remained on friendly terms with most members

except for Qasmi. It is also true though, that when Faiz was imprisoned; it was Qasmi who arranged for the launch ceremony of his new book *Dast-e-Saba* at the risk of his reputation and social standing. Not only was an organization that was considered 'suspicious' in government circles arranging for a book launch, it was doing so while the poet was in jail on charges of treason and sedition. Despite this, Faiz and Qasmi's relations never warmed and their differences continued to grow over time, though for other reasons.

Faiz himself never referred to his 'divorce' from the organization and never considered it a distancing from the movement itself or a betrayal of his progressive ideals. He continued writing about themes he considered important as revealed to him by his conscience and intuition. Thus, his disassociation from the PWA was never a big factor in influencing his writings in a different direction since he had always been independent minded. Faiz was never extreme in his views even while maintaining a steadfast dedication to his ideals and beliefs about society and humanity. Moderation and self-restraint was the core of his personality and this served him in good stead while many of his contemporaries would allow their fiery feelings to run away with them leading to all manner of extremist views or works that appeared harsh and demagogic in tone and style.

Urdu literature in this era produced many works in this style which echoed these insurgent slogans, denounced the indolent traditions of the past and called for smashing the decrepit idols of days gone by. Sibte Hasan has termed this 'the age of literary terrorism'.

Faiz, thanks to his reserve, stayed above this fray while using his poetry to unmask the brutal face of oppression and injustice. His nationalist poems which sang

of his love for his land and its people in the same tones that one would reserve for a beloved were especially admired and appreciated by workers and common people. Farmers, peasants and workers would be ecstatic upon hearing these works and would always demand that Faiz recite these at meetings and poetry hearings in poor neighborhoods. Faiz's more 'exalted themed' poems were no less mellifluous in winning over the hearts of his admirers. It was these poems that determined the direction of his poetic evolution and his admirers have always included these in his 'progressive' works as well.

The stated objectives of the organization provided authorities with a ready excuse to accuse them of the 'sins' of being 'Socialist', 'Communist' or 'Atheist'. Efforts were started to revoke their legality and this led, eventually, to a terminal weakening of the association and its eventual division into small, regional sub chapters. This happened much later and the progressive, humanist ideas of its founders stayed alive and vibrant in the works of Faiz and his many contemporaries. Today, these same ideas serve as an inspiration to a new generation. All writers, poets and artists who cast a critical glance at society's ills and long for a world free of oppression, injustice and poverty (and there is no shortage of such people), whatever their creative endeavors, can still be termed 'progressive'.

Excerpted and translated from Parvarish-e-Lauh-o-Qalam: Faiz, Hayaat aur Takhleeqaat by Ludmilla Vasilieva.

References

[1] It is appropriate to say a few words in reference to the PWA about a short story collection called *Angaaray*. This contained works by Sajjad Zaheer, Rasheed Jahan, Mahmood-uz-Zafar and Ahmad Ali and was published in 1932. Some historians consider this collection a milestone in the formation of the PWA and, in fact, trace the origins of the progressive movement itself to its publication which caused uproar. The writers were self declared Communist and Socialists and, for government authorities, this itself was enough to ban the book as well as issue orders for the revocation of all published copies. This, of course, led to even more attention for the book from all quarters. However, the publication of this collection cannot be considered the beginning of the PWA. A.S. Sukhochov has pointed out that the traditions already present in Urdu literature later termed 'progressive' could only be expressed in newer forms adapted by the writers of the PWA. A meeting in January 1935 in London of a small literary group is the true beginning of the association. These were young people educated in England, inspired by socialist ideals and also familiar with Literature who prepared an outline for forming an all India association of progressive writers and artists and prepared the initial manifesto. It had the signatures of its 'chief editor' Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, Mohammad Deen Taseer and a few others. Copies were made of the document and some were dispatched to India to 'like minded, progressive writers'. One reached the literary group run by Mahmood-uz-Zafar and Rasheed Jahan.

[2] Jallianwala Bagh: The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, alternatively known as the Amritsar Massacre, is named after the Jallianwala Bagh (Garden) in the northern Indian city of Amritsar. On April 13, 1919, British Indian Army soldiers under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer opened fire on a peaceful, unarmed gathering of men,

women and children celebrating the Punjabi New Year. The firing lasted about 10 minutes and official British Raj sources placed the fatalities at 379. According to private sources there were over 1000 deaths, with more than 2000 wounded. The British Civil Surgeon indicated that there were 1,526 casualties.

3 Meeraji (1913-1949), modernist poet, one of the founders of modernist Urdu poetry.

Chapter Twelve

Two Regal Beggars: 'Faiz' and Allama Muhammad Iqbal

Ali Madeeh Hashmi

> There came to our land a sweet singing beggar.
> Sang his songs and moved on.
> Desolate pathways and deserted taverns sprang to life.
> Far away is he now, that regal beggar.
> And forlorn once again, are the streets of our land
>
> 'Iqbal' by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Naqsh-e Faryaadi*

It is often thought that there is nothing common between the poetry and art of 'Allama' Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), 'poet of the East' and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984), Pakistan's poet laureate. Iqbal is considered a champion of Muslims while Faiz is seen as the poet of workers, peasants, the downtrodden and oppressed regardless of faith. Lovers of Iqbal accuse Faiz of being an 'atheist' and a 'communist' while devotees of Faiz often dismiss Iqbal as a 'Maulvi' (a religious fundamentalist).

Undoubtedly, Iqbal composed many poems celebrating the glory of Islam and Muslims. Some of his most famous poems including the epic 'Shikvah' deal with Iqbal's lifelong struggle to empower the Muslims of India and remind them of their lost glory. It is a supreme irony of history that Iqbal who was one of the first to conceive of the then fantastically improbable idea of a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India has been deified as the national poet of Pakistan even though he never lived

in Pakistan, having died in 1938, nine years before the communal partition of British India into the dominions of Pakistan and India.

In contrast, Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz', although a 'citizen of the world' lived and worked a large part of his life in Pakistan. Faiz was never enamored of the idea of 'Pan-Islamism', the notion that all Muslims all over the world are part of one 'Ummah' or community. For Faiz, encouraging people to identify themselves on the basis of religion, nationality, ethnicity or anything other than their common humanity was inherently divisive. In addition, by virtue of his early association with the left leaning All India (later All Pakistan) Progressive Writers' Association, Faiz was deeply sympathetic to the plight of ordinary working people and devoted his life and his work to their causes. His poem 'Intesaab' ('Dedication') is ample proof of this.

The two poets connection begins in Sialkot, their home town. Faiz' father, Sultan Mohammad Khan was a friend of Iqbal as well as his contemporary at Cambridge Law. Both Faiz and Iqbal received their early education under the tutelage of the renowned scholar 'Shams-ul-Ulema' (the 'Sun of scholars') Sayyid Mir Hasan at Scotch Mission High School, although at different times. By the time Faiz was in his teens, Iqbal was already a leading figure in the literary life of India and, as such, once presented an award to Faiz in a poetry competition. Iqbal also wrote a letter of reference for Faiz admission to Government College, Lahore for his M.A. degree.

While Faiz disagreed with some aspects of Iqbal's philosophy of life, he was an admirer of Iqbal's poetry. As proof, one can point, initially, to the poem that opened this essay which, a saddened Faiz wrote in 1938, after Iqbal's death.

There is no authoritative record of Iqbal ever expressing an opinion about Faiz' poetry. In addition, in the heat of the rising independence movement against British rule, which intensified after the first World War and its aftermath including the eventual abolition of the Turkish Sultanate, the last of the traditional Muslim Caliphates, Iqbal was preoccupied with weightier matters. However Faiz has written quite a bit in his prose works about the artistic and philosophic aspects of Iqbal's poetry.

Interestingly, in spite of receiving almost universal acclaim and praise, both locally and internationally neither man was convinced of the worth of his own work. Iqbal says, 'I have never considered myself a poet, I have no interest in the art of poetry. However, I have adopted the poem as a way of describing some issues pertinent to this country (British India).'

Similarly, Faiz, one of the most beloved poets of South Asia and beyond, writes about himself:

> 'It is the poet's birthday, bring wine position, title, honors, what has he not received the only shortcoming, is that the one being praised has written no verses worthy of any book'.

As stated, it is ironic that Iqbal is considered a poet of 'Pakistan' since he died 9 years before the partition of India. It was Faiz who became the true inheritor of Iqbal's poetic legacy in the newly independent state. Although Faiz lived in many different places at many different times, he remained very much a poet of Pakistan, more so since he was also a poet of protest and throughout his life, he had much to protest about in his 'beloved land'.

In *Culture and Identity: Selected English Writings of Faiz*[1] three essays by Faiz spell out in some details his thoughts about the poetry, personality and art of Iqbal.

First, he quotes England's pre-eminent poet and critic Samuel Coleridge (1772-1834) as saying that no man was a great poet who was not also a great philosopher. In the East, a whole galaxy of great names are testament to this foremost among them Jalaluddin Muhammad 'Rumi' (1207-1273), Muslihuddin 'Saadi' (1184-1283), Hafez 'Shirazi' (1315-1390), Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (1253-1325) and last, but not least, Mirza Asadullah Khan 'Ghalib' (1797-1869). For Faiz, Iqbal, too, belongs in the ranks of these great mystics for he possessed not only an intimate knowledge of both Eastern and Western philosophy, he was also well versed in several languages allowing him to describe his point of view with eloquence.

In addition, says Faiz, like all the Western 'poets of affirmation', Dante, Milton and Goethe, Iqbal too was no mere abstract thinker. He was and remained intimately involved in the social and political life of his community and for the Muslims of India, he was not only a political but religious and spiritual guide as well.

Where the poetry and works of Iqbal and Faiz diverge is that while Iqbal took as his starting point the lost glory of the Muslims of India and the world, this point of view is absent from the poetry of Faiz. Not that Faiz intentionally avoided the subjects of God, faith or Islam, infact, his poetry has frequent references to *Roz-e-Mehshar*' (the Day of Judgement'), *Jaza-o-Saza* (Divine Reward and Punishment) etc. The difference is that Faiz early on chose as his muse the collective human struggle against nature as well as against the oppression and injustice practiced by man upon man. For this reason, Faiz' poetry has few or no references to metaphysical, supranatural elements such as angels, satan, etc.

In one of his essays, Faiz analyzes the evolution of Iqbal's poetry as passing through four distinct phases. The

young Iqbal, like all youth, paints pictures of the beauty of nature as well as about love and its loss. In the next phase, he rises above his own self and fixes his gaze on his community, the Muslims of India and talks of their misery, their hopes, fears and sorrows. Going beyond this, Iqbal fixes his gaze on all of humanity and humanity's collective struggles and in the last, most mature phase of his poetry, his vision enlarges to encompass the entire Universe exemplified in the verse:

> *If I am the end of all Creation, what is beyond me?*
> *Where is the peak of all my stormy tempests?*
> ('Hazrat-e Insaan' in *Armaghan-e Hijaaz*)

It is also interesting that even though many of Iqbal's poems are considered 'Islamic', according to Faiz, nowhere in Iqbal's poetry does one find descriptions of heaven, hell etc except symbolically. The simple reason, according to Faiz, is that Iqbal is a poet of struggle. One of Iqbal's translators, Victor Kiernan elaborating on this explains Iqbal's central poetic metaphor, that of *Khudi* as a sense of evolution and history through advance and struggle, of the development of a dynamic individual personality developed through practical activity in the world as against the lingering Sufi ideal of passive contemplation and mystic absorption. This struggle is that of Man striving to maintain himself against an uncaring universe. The eternal world beyond the natural world, where there is no struggle, no effort is meaningless to Iqbal. His protagonist, the fallen angel 'Iblees' or Satan says as much to his erstwhile companion, the archangel 'Jibreel' or Gabriel in Iqbal's brief but intense poem 'Jibreel o Iblees'. Iblees says (referring to the afterworld): 'It is no

longer possible for me to pass through here. So barren is this land devoid of palace or alleys'.

According to Faiz, this is the central theme of Iqbal's poetry, Man, the universe in which he dwells, his loneliness in this finite world, and his struggle against the forces arrayed against him, both internally in the form of his own greed, cowardice, and heartlessness in exploiting his fellow humans as well as externally in the form of an unforgiving and harsh natural world against which he must struggle to sustain himself.

Faiz describes Iqbal's conflicting opinions thus:

> 'Most writers have put a great deal of stress on the religious element in Iqbal's work without clarifying that Iqbal's concept of religion was in many ways totally opposed to the concept of the orthodox Muslim theologian. In fact, the Mullah is the subject of some of the bitterest satirical verses written by Iqbal. On the other hand, progressive critics have made much of his admiration for Marx and Lenin and his genuine appreciation of the egalitarian character of socialist society, but they ignore that his approach to social and economic problems was idealistic and abstract'.

Iqbal's time saw prevailing Indian Muslim opinion split between two equally unsatisfactory schools of thought. The liberal apologists of Empire personified by 'Allama' Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the Cambridge educated ICS (Indian Civil Service) man, best remembered for his beloved translation and interpretation of the Quran and religious clerics best represented by the fiery Jauhar brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, staunch supporters of the Khilafat movement and a perpetual thorn in the side of the

British. Neither the liberals exhortations to be loyal to King and Empire nor the religious scholars' calls to return to the Islam of bygone days reflected the true desires of India's Muslims especially the emerging middle classes.

Faiz goes on (Iqbal's) work reflected all the inner intellectual contradictions (and the) dreams and aspirations of the middle strata of Indo-Pakistan Muslims during the first three or four decades (of the 20th century), making his work popular amongst progressives and reactionaries alike for his title as the national poet of Pakistan.

While Faiz describes the evolution of Iqbal's thought in relation to the society he lived in, a similar explanation can be offered psychologically. This dichotomy of the 'inner and the outer', 'the world and the self', me and other is at the very heart of human existence. It torments and entices us, maddens and frustrates us. It is the quintessential dilemma of a self aware being.

Externally (as Faiz points out) in the objective world of nature, Man's universe is not limited to this world alone but to other worlds beyond this one and thence to the entire universe. No goal no matter how lofty can bring him peace and fulfillment. 'Beyond every mountain peak that I climb lies another, higher one. Thus, each success is a partial failure and each fulfillment a partial prostration'.

Internally, in Man's subjective world of self experience, he struggles against his own base impulses of greed, anger and the desires of his 'animal' nature: lust, power, the wish to dominate, subjugate and exploit his fellow man.

Within this struggle lies hidden the despair and anger of a self aware creature aware of its own end, approaching inexorably in the form of its death. We struggle against it, by accumulating possessions, money

and the trappings of a 'successful' life or by frantic efforts to 'possess' or 'own' others body and soul as if that would cushion us against our own end or render it more bearable. In reality, this agony is a reflection of the pain immortalized in Dylan Thomas searing 'Do Not Go Gentle' 'Do not go gentle into that good night, Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light.'

The creative nature of art and poetry that engages and struggles with these universal human truths eases our pain and erases our loneliness, if only for a time.

If such creativity goes a step further and attempts to change some of those truths by changing the conditions of human existence, it becomes the measure of greatness. This is the art of an Iqbal or a Faiz embodied in verses such as:

> 'The secrets of this ocean of silence are locked
> 'til cleaved by (your very own) rod of Moses' (Iqbal)

or:

> 'Speak! to summon Judgment Day
> Speak! to hasten the day of justice'. (Faiz)

Reference

1 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Culture and Identity: Selected Writngs of Faiz*, compiled by Sheema Majeed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.164-83.

Chapter Thirteen

The Hue of the Garment: Faiz Ahmed Faiz and a New Idiom for the People

Salima Hashmi

> Blessings be upon the soil of my land, where
> they have decreed the custom
> That men should walk no more with heads held high
> And if a lover should set out on an errand of love
> Let it be with downcast eyes, and a skulking gait
>
> This as the new order for all those of faith
> That bricks and stones are incarcerated,
> and only the dogs are free[1]

At the age of 70, Faiz Ahmed Faiz expressed the hope that he would soon settle down to a steady career, provided of course that he were to discover his true vocation in life. This, it could be said, was an appropriate sentiment for a man who had tried out careers as teacher, military personnel, journalist, film maker, cultural planner, and jailbird. With such a varied sampling, it was perhaps inevitable that he was also involved with many of the performing arts.

I would like to begin with a number of themes in Faiz's work with the performing arts:

First, his ideas concerning patronage of the arts, both financial and aesthetic, Second, the role of the arts in nation building, and

finally his personal involvement in film. theatre, and music.

In engaging with all of these themes, and very directly with the first two. Faiz was consciously an actor within a significant historical context, and his ideas were influenced (though not decisively so, as we shall see) by his political opinions.

The twentieth century opened upon the ebb tide of European empire building in many parts of the world. In India, the British Raj was an entrenched reality and yet had lost all moral credibility, most directly on account of being responsible for the economic turmoil and human tragedy that followed the Great War. Faiz himself came from Punjabi landed gentry, a group that was among those worst affected by this turmoil. The family was reduced from relative comfort to something approaching pauperdom, and, although their change of fortune must also be attributed to the death of his father, there is no doubt as to what, like many of his generation, he attributed the misfortune.

> 'I started gradually becoming a poet. Two or three things determined that. Before I finished my first degree, my father died and I suddenly discovered that from grandees and rich men of town we became paupers. He had left some property, some landed property but he had left bigger debts than the property. That was one factor that had great impact on my family and myself. Secondly, suddenly came the Great Depression. As a result, the prices of agriculture produce went below rock bottom. The countryside became very impoverished and the little income that we

> had from land also stopped. The Great Depression had a great impact politically and personally, not only on myself, but also on whole conumunties, particularly of the Muslims'.[2]

And there was that other reason too.

> ...there was one thing which created the impulse and the motivation for expressing this ordeal in poetry. I fell in love (as everybody does at that age) at 17 or 18, I fell in love with an old playmate of mine, an Afghan girl, whose family had came from Afghanstan at the same time as my father. They settled in a village near Faisalabad. My sister was married in that town. So I went to this village to see my family and there, one morning. I woke up, I saw a very beautiful girl feeding the parrot. She looked at me and I looked at her and then we promptly fell in love; rather, I did. As was the custom, we sort of secretly held hands, but that's as far as we could go. She was married off to some rich Landlord I never met her again. So we lived unhappily ever afterwards – for eight years'.[3]

At Islamia College and Government College Lahore, Faiz started his dual careers as poet and Marxist, both of which, somewhat chaotically, affected his relationships with the performing arts. For all modernists, whether of the Nationalist or Marxist variety, the fundamental challenge of the age was to imbue their people with a set of ideas which would help to galvanize and underpin the struggle for independence. For example, it was from this time that the Turkish word 'Vatan' which meant 'the village where one

was born' came to mean also the 'nation' or 'state' (and still carries the dual meaning today). In India, as in many other parts of what is now the 'Third World', the question was either to reinvent the cultural idiom so that it incorporates modernity or to impose a second set of ideas after capturing the state. The third alternative, which is very apparent in the Muslim, world today, comprises a reinvention of tradition that decisively rejects modernity and was at that time not in evidence. This question, which is of course still with us, was vast, involving not only politics and economics but language, art, culture and indeed, identity, and explains why Faiz is still read today by those who are not academics.

Faiz's approach to this challenge, contrary to the choice taken by many of his equally orthodox Marxist contemporaries, was a gradualist reinvention. It is perhaps significant in this regard that Faiz deeply respected Gandhi, who, in his own way, tried to reinvent a cultural language and, at the same time, never lost contact with modernists. In the middle of the terrible violence which swept across the subcontinent at Partition, Faiz crossed the border to attend Gandhi's funeral. Just as Gandhi with his approach invented the 'politician as a saint, Faiz invented, in part at least, the 'poet as a people's revolutionary'.[4]

> I learned of misery, helplessness, despair,
> I learned to be the friend of suffering creatures,
> I came to know the torment of the oppressed.
> The truth of sobbing breath and livid features.
>
> Wherever now the friendless crouch and wail
> Till in their eyes the trickling tears grow cold,
> Or where the vulture hovering on broad pinions
> Snatches the morsel from their feeble hold.

When labourers' flesh is sold in chaffering streets,
Or pavements run with poor men's blood, a flame
That lurks inside me blazes up beyond
All power of quenching, do not ask its name.[5]

The moment was clearly one of change, as Faiz saw it:

> During this period... a whole bunch of young men returned from British Universities all belonging to rich or aristorcratic families and all communists. Some of them stayed communist, others after dabbling in it for a few years, gave it up. Anyway, they came back and they started a literary movement that was called the Progressive Writers' Movement. It was not a communist or a Marxist movement as such, but it was a sort of realistic movement. Previously during the classical period, our poetry and our literature was very largely given up to legends and fanciful tales and romanticizing and poetry of largely linguistic gymnastics. During this period, a genuine lyrical political poetry was born.[6]

In Faiz's work, this transition is marked by the landmark poem 'Mujh se pehli si Mohabbat' where the traditional image of the 'beloved' and the turmoil of love are forcefully, but not violently, equated with the turmoil of the age. Perhaps not the best, but certainly the best known of all of Faiz's poems, it has come to be widely identified with his name.

Do you remember still, how it was once?
When I thought you would be

there, and life would go on in
brightness and in joy
And with thoughts of you, what was,
there to think of in this world
For as your beauty shone, all time
would be perpetual spring,
And the endless depths of your eyes
were enough for all creation
And you would be there, and destiny
herself would be but a handmaiden.

It was not so, it was a consummation devoutly to be wished.
For there are other cares in this life,
as there are the cares of love
And other joys too, as there is the
joy of loving.

The magical spells of dark and
countless aeons
Woven into the fabric of the heavens
Warp and weft of cloth of gold
And living flesh being purveyed in
the streets
Cold in the covering of dust, still warm in blood
And the eye wanders there too, what is one to do
And there is your beauty to behold – what is one to do

For there are other pains, as there is the pain of love
And there are other joys, as there are the joys of loving
And so it cannot be, the way it was once.[7]

This poem, associated most definitely with Faiz's Marxist beliefs, is not an illustration of dogma, but acknowledges both the romantic and the Marxist message. Written at a time when worlds were collapsing around him, it demonstrated that Faiz could draw upon more than one set of sensibilities, and, without discarding the reassuring pleasures of tradition, in this case the formal devices of the ghazal, could make it possible for his audiences to embrace the Marxist message as a humanist one. In a twofold reading of the figure of the 'lovers', one relating to the personal, the other to the people, the land, or humankind, the poem could be interpreted as something akin to the Sufi message, which in the simplest words is the message of Divine Love; or, more properly, the Love of the Divine. And yet, even in a casual acquaintanceship, it is clear what one must understand by the 'divine' is not necessarily the godhead in the usual sense of the word. When we talk of 'Divine Love' what we mean by it, and what the Sufi surely intends too, is a love which is beyond mere human love, something wider and much deeper; as such it takes the poet beyond mere longing for union, and into what is a pure passion.

Faiz's poem 'Mujh se pehli si Mohabbat' is surely the chronicle of a progression from a personal and human love to an involvement with all that is beyond it. Sometimes it takes the form of the homeland, or of the lowly and wretched of the earth, or of all mankind: and, always, it is Faiz's personal version of the Divine. Does this mean then that, ultimately, a great poet does not subscribe totally to any orthodoxy? This deviation from Marxist orthodoxy had recognized limits. Within the subcontinent, various Princely courts had traditionally patronized the arts, both the visual and the performing arts. They were also associated with religious institutions, such as temples and *Mazars*. The

British government, in its role as successor to the Mughal court and in its efforts to encourage 'arts and crafts', was also part of the patronage structure. Faiz saw early on how in due course these traditional patrons would be replaced by the new post-Independence state, partly by an anticipated decline of the institutions of court and *Mazar*, and partly by deliberate state policy. In 1938, he wrote:

> One of the aspects of cultural development is that prevalent social values have to be altered and progressive literature is that which plays its part in the propagation of than new values, but these cannot become a part of culture until they become a part of collective living, and this in turn is not possible until the political and economic structure is altered to be in sympathy with these new Values.[8]

It should be pointed out that from Independence until the 1970s, Pakistan did not have any documented cultural policy. The first document of its kind was largely written by Faiz, though its proposals were never implemented in any detail and, as a cultural policy, it was not developed. In the first twenty-five years after Independence, therefore, patronage of the performing arts was a hit and miss affair. The options on offer were the film industry in particular, and big business, given in this latter case the overlap that exists in Pakistan between the new nawabs of wealth and the old aristocracy. And finally, patronage was dependent on the vagaries of politics and personages and the state. Many episodes indicate that Faiz saw fit to adapt himself and his role to suit all of these patrons in the performing arts. For example, he allowed his poetry to be used in songs in films, and, to all evidence,

valued the audience that he could reach through this medium.

Faiz encouraged and organized the patronage of performing arts by (often Left leaning) businessmen, for example, Hayat Ahmed Khan. These decades were in his view a transitory phase and much a move was justified by Marxist analysis of society. As envisioned, the businessmen (often from old aristocratic families) would provide the capital but the aesthetic tone would come from a broader audience.

> True culture is not a decorative border within which a society operates, but the warp and weft of that society.[9]

In judging and valuing new work, Faiz looked for that careful balance between tradition and modernity which, as we saw, was so distinctive a feature of his own work. It was a matter of taste as much as principle for him that experimentation in the performing arts should be progressive, yet not so stridently progressive that it was at odds with traditional forms. As a critic, therefore, he can be said to have paid himself the compliment of valuing the work of others by what he himself achieved in his poetry. In an interview Faiz stated:

> In a sense all literature is propaganda unless it totally fails to communicate, when it is no literature at all. Even nonsensical literature propagates nonsense. Literature fails to be literature and becomes journalism or pure propaganda only when it lacks the additional aesthetic dimension required of all literature.[10]

And in answer to another question, he said:

> Basically there is only one value – humanism. All other values, love of peace,

> freedom, social justice, compassion, alleviation of human suffering, self realization, adoration of goodness and beauty, flow from it.[11]

He was an acute observer, also a tolerant one, and, in principle and practice, was prepared to share cultural space with those who had different tastes or goals. His personal choices were also reflected in his view as to how the state should provide aesthetic patronage: that is, through institutions which were concerned, first, to develop performing arts; second, to encourage a diversity of styles; and, third, to ensure that innovation meant progressive reinventions of traditional forms.

Faiz outlined the problems facing newly independent countries, such as Pakistan, in the following manner:

> First, the problem of salvaging from the debris of their shattered national cultures those elements, which are basic to national identity, which can be adjusted and adapted to the need, of a more advanced social structure, and which can help to strengthen and promote progressive social values and attitudes. Second, (the need) to reject and discard those elements which were relevant to a backward and outmoded social structure; which are either irrelevant or repugnant to a more advanced system of social relationships and which hinder the progress of more rational enlightened human values and attitudes. Third, to accept and assimalate from imported foreign and western cultures those elements that can help to elevate national culture to higher

> technical, aesthetic and intellectual standards. Fourth, to repudiate those elements among these imports that are deliberately aimed at promoting degeneracy, decadence and social reaction. Roughly speaking, these problems may be termed problems of new cultural adaptation, emancipation, and purification.[12]

In 1968, a committee designated the Standing Committee on Art and Culture was set up. It remained in session for nearly six months, and in that time visited practically all the important cultural centres from Peshawar to Chittagong, and interviewed over 300 artists, writers, scholars, and cultural organizers. Its report was submitted to the then Ministry of Education towards the end of 1968 but, before this could become wider official consideration, the country was overtaken by severe political upheavals. As a result, the report never saw the light of day, nor was it officially accepted or rejected. In 1975, when Faiz was appointed Director General of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, he returned to the 1968 document, and proposed and drafted all of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government's legislation on Art and Culture in accordance with the Committee's findings. The report was reissued in 1975 and is still the most comprehensive policy document on Pakistani art and culture.

The patronage of performing arts by the government was a topic directly addressed by Faiz in his policy paper on culture. The substitution of the state for princely courts as patron was a change which raises a number of issues. Faiz, it is clear, saw 'Arts Councils' as filling one part of the gap. Addressing the same question from another angle, he stated that it is important 'we do not change the social class of the artists', and was careful to

explain the 'historical reasons' for the connections between social class and practice. Like many other poets, Faiz would ensure that his poems were sent to well-known singers who were often the courtesans of Lahore. They were, and still are, the custodians of the finest traditions in classical music and ghazal. In doing so, Faiz was trying to preserve the milieu from which performing artists emerged. This was particularly important because, in the subcontinent, there are hardly any formal 'schools' and these arts are practised in families and, in many cases, within 'castes'. The word *Mirasi*, synonymous with musician, was also derogatory when referring to hangers-on of feudal courts. Faiz referred to their historical antecedents in the report on culture.

> During the declining years of the Mughal Empire in the subcontinent, the arts were reduced to become handmaids of dissolute room and instruments of their decadent pleasures. This was particularly true of music and dancing which were encouraged to become the monopoly of a socially and morally unacceptable class. After the downfall of the Mughals, the moral indignation evoked by these decadent practices and the social prejudices attaching to the class of 'singing girls' were detached from the social conditions, which gave them birth and transferred, in the popular mind, to the arts themselves.

For Faiz, this was the connection that ensured the content of performing arts was elitist and yet not aristocratic. In this context, 'elitist' would be a form enjoyed by a minority or acknowledged as high art; 'aristocratic' property would be the cultural property of a particular class. All the same, this rather heavy-handed social

engineering shows how deeply the ideas of state-planning influenced leftist thinkers of the time.

The leaden weight of these ideas is relieved to some extent by the thought that most practitioners of the performing arts at the time, particularly musicians, welcomed them, and that Faiz himself saw them as interim measures, which would serve only while educational institutions were being developed with the aim, among others, of transforming the ways in which the performing arts were taught. It was suggested that training in these arts must be institutionalized along modern lines, and directed towards a new creativity that draws its inspiration and material from the synthesis of folk and classical music and dance. Only then would the younger generation be able to appreciate, enjoy, and participate in their own national forms of self-expression.

> Folk and classical forms of expression are complementary and inter-related rather than antagonistic and mutually exclusive. All classical music and dance derive from folk dances and melodies and in these turn are re-absorbed to enrich and diversify folk forms of expression.

In any case, the planning fell victim to political vicissitudes, and, in Pakistan, the government turned aside or cheered as all the old institutions of arts first decayed, and then weathered commercial storms. Of course the bigotry instilled into Pakistani society by General Zia's regime was a major factor.

State cultural policy is not only about aesthetics but national politics, if for no other reason than because subsidies have to be rationalized and priorities identified. The State needs to get as much from the arts as they get from the State. Again, in this regard, many different and

discordant strands can be found in Faiz's ideas. One of these ideas concerns performing arts as symbols of nationhood. Despite the British Raj's patronage of 'arts and crafts', many in the subcontinent thought their cultural symbols were undervalued.

There was some degree of tension on this score primarily because the modernists, who saw it as a national issue, were often also the ones educated in British institutions and therefore culturally somewhat removed from the standards they raised. Anyhow, Faiz felt that the arts, even those belonging to an aristocratic milieu, like the Bolshoi Ballet in the USSR, were symbols of a nation which the 'people' as represented by the State should encourage as a part of their inheritance. In fact, in stressing the symbolic significance of the arts, he also saw them in universal terms. As such he worked with the UN to make them a part of human heritage.

It is worthwhile to look briefly for comparison at the experiences and challenges of such cultural policies in India. One problem which has emerged there is that state patronage has led to an aesthetic mummification of 'heritage' performing arts. In Pakistan, the Arts Councils have suffered from the same problem. Institutions, as it turned out, did not function well as artistic patrons in part because they saw themselves as guardians of national treasures rather than patrons of living arts. In Pakistan, this issue was further complicated when the country under Zia took to using religious idioms to reject modernity. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Faiz was not to witness for long the implementation of these reactionary ideas of cultural policy and their outcome.

There were other political dimensions to state patronage of the arts. Unlike many other leftists, Faiz, as noted above, drew no distinction between 'high' art and

'folk' art. He was however very far from the 'ode to the tractor' school. The 'high' versus 'folk' art argument was also intimately related to Pakistan's attempt to develop a coherent political ideology. Folk arts were not simply populist; they were also distinctly provincial and thus very closely tied to ethnic politics. For the greater part of Pakistan's history they were frowned upon as being contrary to modernist ideas of a centralized state and a national culture. Again Faiz took his own and contrary view, as follows:

(a) In as much as all regional cultures, are an organic part of the totality of our national culture, for the part does not preclude and, in fact, predicate, love for the whole. The confusion of thought that continues to plague this subject stems from one basic fallacy that seeks to counterpoise national and regional cultures as antagonistic rivals and thus postulates that one can or would develop only at the expense of the other. This fallacy can be dispelled by a clear understanding of the obvious fact that is the country is a political union of the people inhabiting these regions, similarly, national culture is an aggregate of these regional cultures, plus the unifying bonds of faith and history.[13]

(b) A genuine synthesis of diverse forms of regional cultures into national patterns cannot be brought by any forcible impositions through administrative meant. It can only evolve through a gradual accumulation of affinities and a gradual assimilation of 'sympathetic elements into a new compound. Thus is possible only if diversity' is not misinterpreted as disunity and the natural process of the growth of diverse elements is not perverted or stifled by any impatience for immediate results.[14]

He saw the state's role as promoting all the regional arts, with the idea that in the long term, what would evolve, rather than be imposed, would be a multilingual, multiethnic and, indeed, multiclass national culture.



Faiz & Neruda in Sochi, Georgia, 1962

Not surprisingly, Neruda and Faiz knew one another, and were long-distance friends. Neruda chaired the committee that awarded Faiz the coveted Lenin Peace Prize in 1962. They met in Sochi, and, one wondrous evening, at a dinner Neruda gave in honour of Faiz, the two poets recited to each other, first, in their own languages interspersed with input from the official translators; and then, growing impatient with the pace, took over from their interpreters and began translating themselves to each other in English!

Apart from Faiz's gradualist vision, he valued the approach of inventing and evolving a new idiom, because he recognized that the organic connections between artists and their patrons could not easily be replaced by an undeveloped State as yet totally unsure of its direction. Nor, for most of Pakistan's history, was the State in any sense representative. In Zia's Pakistan, both 'high' art and 'folk' art came under fire most notably the arts which are an

integral part of the Sufi shrines together with Sufi music and poetry from Sindh and Punjab in particular.

Before we address Faiz's views on the State and the performing arts, it is necessary to point out the crux of Faiz's political views and in what way they were at odds with certain contemporary ideas. At no stage did Faiz foresee the current situation in which the performing arts are almost totally commercialized and commodified. He would almost certainly dismiss the idea that market forces are either a people's referendum on the value of any performing art or indeed capable of providing a guide to aesthetic direction. Commerce was for him a small part of the social structure, and not the holy text of a theological society.

Interestingly, after Zia, the recovery of Sufi music from suppression has come about less through renewed State patronage than commercial patrons: the pop group Junoon has found patrons in Pepsi Cola; Abida Perveen in banking concerns; and Bulleh Shah among business firms. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, schooled in traditional classical music, has emerged as a 'star', thanks to the revival of qawwali.

As noted, Faiz's ideas of State and art were never applied officially for any extended period of time and, as such, remain underdeveloped. However, in his personal life and work, he was to follow through many of these ideas.

Faiz had a lifelong romance with film, theatre, dance and music. While he was director of the Lahore Arts Council in 1959, its puppet theatre came into being, as did its first formal music academy. Later, under Bhutto's government, the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, National Institute of Folk Heritage, Music Research Cell, National Film Development Corporation, the National

Puppet Theatre, all came into being as a result of Faiz's blueprint for culture.

Although his poetry was used in films as early as 1942, his direct involvement in film making came with his script for (until recently) Pakistan's only international award-winning film *Day Shall Dawn* (1958). Other scripts on feature films followed, for example, on art, on the poet Iqbal, and while some were made, some were abandoned. Faiz's passion for the visual arts, such as film, it could be argued, grew out of the verbal tradition. The visual and verbal are close relations in the performing arts in South Asia, especially if one keeps in mind the 'song and dance' content of South Asian cinema. Employing the word for greater evocative power seems obvious. For many in the performing arts, that is, dance, theatre, and film today, Faiz remains an icon.

In the reappraisals of Faiz that follow the passing of an era, and even in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet State, his allegiance to a socio-political value system does not appear to have diminished his infuence.The poet's voice continues to find a resonance in the tumult that surrounds us. It continues as part of women's activism, human rights movement, and peasants' rallies.

There is a realization that Faiz's poetry has documented the last fifty years of Pakistan's history the carnage of Partition, the advent of dictatorships, the civil war and dismemberment of the country in 1971. It has expressed the passionate disappointments, and, more importantly, as always with this poet, the constant resurrection of hope.

> The cry:
> I am the Truth
> Will rend the slues

Which means
You, I, and all of us
Will belong to the people
Which means
You, I and all of us
We will see
Certainly we, too, will see
That day ordained.[15]

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Chapter Fourteen

Faiz Interviewed by Tsar

Faiz Ahmad Faiz is one of the leading Urdu poets and literary figures of the Subcontinent. He was born in 1911 in Sialkot, Panjab, in what is now Pakistan. He was one of the members of the Progressive Writers' Movement of the thirties, which called for writing directed towards more immediate social concerns. His own poetry has been characterized by profound humanistic concerns and empathy for the less fortunate. For the last several years he has been the editor in chief of *Lotus*, a quarterly of Afro-Asian writings based until recently in Beirut. He was recently nominated for the Nobel Prize.

The following interview was granted to *The Toronto South Asian Review* and *Al-Hilal* by Mr Faiz on September 26, 1982, the day following a mushaira at which he gave a reading. Except for some of the questions put forward by *Al-Hilal*, the part of the interview reported below was conducted entirely in English and is given, as far as possible, verbatim.—Ed.)

Tsar: Mr. Faiz, what do you think should be the role of literature in the Third World? Do you believe, for example, in art for art's sake in the Third World?

Faiz: In the Third World, art for art's sake is a luxury. People who have their bellies full, their bodies clothed, they can afford the luxury of art for art's sake. People who have pressing problems of hunger, of poverty, of ignorance,

disease, what not there the role of literature is to help them to alleviate their sufferings, and to that extent it becomes a commitment.

Tsar: What questions does your own poetry address?

Faiz: The same.

Tsar: What do you think of immigrant literature in, for example, North America? Do you think it can maintain its identity and links and still have a future?

Faiz: I think it can! Not only it can, but it should. Because [immigrants from the Third World] can never only become Canadians or Americans or British—wherever they are settled. At the same time they cannot alienate themselves from the medium in which they are living. So they have to find a synthesis between their own identities and their environment. They have to adjust to their environment; at the same time they must make efforts to maintain and strengthen their identities.

Tsar: Do you see a new strain of Urdu literature coming out from here?

Faiz: At least there is a great deal of enthusiasm. Literature is an evolutionary process. It takes a long time before you can evolve some new structures or some new forms, new styles of your own, but I think efforts are going on.

Tsar: In last night's mushaira, would it be fair to say, in your opinion, that there was a drastic difference in the subjects touched by the visiting poets as compared to those by local poets?

Faiz: There was! I think there was.

Tsar: Why do you think so?

Faiz: Because the poets who live in Pakistan they are directly confronted with problems which the people here are not confronted with. The immigrants are not directly involved in the struggle for democracy, freedom or justice, people who are living there are directly involved in the social or political or economic processes going on inside the country. Immigrants have their own problems, of course, but they are a different set of problems.

Tsar: How do you see immigration, particularly to the West, in cultural terms, bearing in mind, 1) the fact that the West has been intimately involved with the Third World in the past as a ruler and dominating influence, and, 2) that the Western World is such a dynamic and rapidly moving world that for the rest of the world the future means just catching up with the West, leaving little room for independent development?

Faiz: You see, the first problem is to get your mind decolonized and at least to get rid of those vestiges of colonialism which stand in the way of your internal development. As things stand today in the Third World most of the Third World, leaving aside the socialist countries which are in the Third World, their resources, their economic dependence, are so closely tied up with Western interests, and the international monopolies have so much of a hold on the economies as well as the political structures of those countries that the first task is to get rid of this what in the jargon is called neocolonialism.

Tsar: Do you think that immigration is a kind of succumbing to the colonial influence by the people of the Third World?

Faiz: In a way it is. In a way it is. Immigration is the failure of the Third World countries to look after their own people, failure to solve their own difficulties. People emigrate only when they find that living in their own homelands does not provide them with a satisfactory living. The fault or the responsibility for this is that of the people in power, of the political leaders.

Tsar: What would you say have been the major influences on your life to put it in two steps?

- What major events in your lifetime?
- What personalities literary or otherwise have influenced you?

Faiz: I think the first influence the first major development in my personal life was when my father died. Suddenly from a fairly affluent household we became paupers. This was during the period of the depression. And then for the first time I discovered that while living in an affluent household, one knew so little about what goes on how people live, how the other half lives. And as soon as one was descended into the same category as the have-nots, one discovered that their problems, their sufferings, were much more important than one's own subjective emotions and problems. That was the first thing that influenced one's writing. And that automatically politicized your mind. Then one entered from intellectual involvement into political involvement, with political problems. In addition to that one discovered that even knowing about your own people

and their problems was not enough. Because your problems were interrelated and you find out that the problems confronting humanity, what went on in China or in Iran or Africa, had somehow real relevance to your own problems.

Al-Hilal: How about Pakistani writers? Are they leading their society? Are there some prominent ones?

Faiz: Among the good ones, yes. That's one thing. So far as personalities are concerned first you are influenced by your parents and your teachers. After that among the outstanding people one has met, among the political figures: Shaikh Abdullah whom I consider to be one of the four major leaders of the subcontinent: Gandhi, Gaffar Khan, Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, Shaikh Abdullah. Because, the others came after, (they) really capitalized on what had been achieved before. Politically, these people. From the literary point of view, among the many personalities that I have known, the one that I came directly in contact with - in India, in the Subcontinent - and was influenced by, was of course Iqbal. Then one was influenced by one's own contemporaries well, we founded this Progressive Writers' Movement.

Tsar: Do you consider yourself as one of the founders?

Faiz: Yes, I was one of the founders, because we were only a small group. We founded this movement, and then it became very big.

Tsar: Do you see any urgency and purposefulness now in Pakistan and India as there was then? Or do you think there is something lacking?

Faiz: No. There is a great deal of difference between the situation when it was founded and the situation today. Then there was at least one thing which helped in bringing everyone together and that was the fight for independence. After independence there were so many divergent paths which opened up that the organization, as it was got fragmented. And, instead of the faith that one had and the dreams that one had, there came particularly among the younger people a mood of disillusionment, and an amount of cynicism, of negativism, of skepticism. But at the same time, among the more conscious writers, among the serious and responsible writers, the same way of thinking at least continues.

Tsar: Who have been some of the most influential and major Urdu writers of the century?

Faiz: Well, a century is a long thing. But contemporaneously, first there was the biggest name, Muhammad Iqbal and Tagore, of course – if we are talking not only of Urdu. There were many important writers in other regional languages. Talking only of Urdu, among the major figures both in prose and poetry among the prose writers the biggest name at one time was Premchand. As a story writer, and then came a whole group of younger writers Krishan Chander, Saadat Hasan Manto, Vijay Lakshmi, Bedi, Qasmi which came from the Progressive Writers' Movement. Similarly, among the poets, the senior poets after Iqbal were Josh and Faraq, who just died. That's right. Then again came a bunch of young poets.

Al-Hilal: Mr. Faiz, where would you place Iqbal as a religious, political, or Faiz Humanist, mainly which combines religion as well as social?

Faiz: He was a devout Muslim and at the same time he was a great humanist, and he did not find any contradiction there.

Al-Hilal: The platform he presents what is it, is it religion?

Faiz: Man is religious, he is also a friend.

Al-Hilal: What is this friendship? Religious people say that religion is for human beings, how can man be more a friend than he is religious?

Faiz: I am telling you just that. For Iqbal religion is a way of self-fulfillment and of the fulfillment of the personality. He says that himself. And also, it was an instrument of social justice. To that extent, one part of religion is your belief, the dogma. The other part is its practical application in human affairs.

Tsar: Do you feel that you have been understood as a poet by your people?

Faiz: I hope so!

Tsar: Let me ask you a few questions about *Lotus*. After Beirut, what is the future of *Lotus*?

Faiz: That's what I am going to Berlin for tomorrow! It is being published in Berlin, but we have to find out where the editorial office is going to be.

Tsar: Do you think *Lotus* has had a large enough impact on Third World writers?

Faiz: No. (But) I think to a certain extent it has. It has influenced them in this way, that it has introduced them to each other. There was no way for communication between let us say a writer from Cambodia, Vietnam, or Burma with a writer from Ghana or Beirut. At least it served the purpose of a channel of communication between writers.

Tsar: Is it true that you have been nominated for the Nobel Prize?

Faiz: That's what I hear, that is what they tell me.

Chapter Fifteen

A Conversation with Faiz

Muzaffar Iqbal

(Transcript of a conversation between Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Muzaffar Iqbal, Saskatoon, Canada, 4 June 1981)

Question: Our literary and political history is full of so many agitational and emotional movements. The tragedy is that they all begin with a tremendous momentum and gain such immediate and total domination that it seems as if nothing would stand in their way, but after some time, the momentum breaks and where there once was power and driving force, one only finds a vacuum and an emptiness. Take as examples the Quit India Movement or the Khilafat Movement.

In literature there has been one such movement the Progressive Writers' of which you were, of course, a founder. Beginning in 1936, it became in a year or so the most powerful literary movement of its time. So many famous names were associated with it. It appeared then that the future of millions of people of India lay in the success and acceptance of this movement. In less than a decade, schisms began to develop among its founders. By 1949, even you had dissociated yourself from it. So many subgroups came to be formed in what was once a great body of opinion. Now that so much time has passed, how do you look at the Movement? What was its contribution to Urdu literature?

Faiz: First of all, it is not true that the Movement broke into many sub-groups, as you suggest. What was called the

Progressive Writers' Movement or the Progressive Writers' Organization, maintained a general sort of unity as long as it remained focused on one objective at a certain given time and a given circumstance. There are two points one should bear in mind. The Movement or its organization came into existence at a time when the national independence movement was in full swing in our country. There was a specific objective in front of the people, namely, national independence, and on this point there was no difference of opinion.

The second point to remember is that there was no difference of opinion on the social priorities of those times. It was agreed that there was a need to portray the lives and problems of the class which had always been exploited and deprived of basic rights and comforts. It included white collar people in the cities, labourers and similarly neglected segments of society whose lives had never before been considered a fit subject for literature. There was an assumption and a hope that after independence, social injustice would be brought to an end.

Since there was agreement on these basic points, a movement came into existence. It was a united movement. With independence, the first objective was met. However, it was soon evident that true independence had yet to be achieved. Everyone had his own formula. There were different views on how best to reach the goal. So, in that sense, the Movement did suffer from schisms.

There were different views also on how to portray life and its problems realistically in literature. When there is intellectual confusion and lack of direction in a society, it has been observed that people either externalize the problem or do its complete reverse.

Some felt so disgusted at the prevailing uncertainty that they said: 'to hell with it all. Let us look inwards, and

explore our unconscious'. This led to certain purely subjective movements. Their high point was that nothing was either intrinsically good or bad. The result was a kind of anarchism or nihilism or narcissism. I don't think you can blame the Progressive Movement for this development, because some writers have always looked forward, while others have looked over their shoulder. In this sense, the Progressive Writers' Movement has always been there, since literature began.

This is the way it has always been. I believe that such vital literature as is being created today is based on, and flows from, the same values which the Progressive Writers' Movement epitomized. Before the Movement, there were other progressives men like Sheikh Saadi and Iqbal. It is quite another matter that so far we have not been able to decide upon a social structure for ourselves. Nor have we agreed upon our ultimate goal or upon how to reach it. Naturally, this has had an effect on literature. Nevertheless, I am of the view that much literature of vitality is being created, literature which is fundamentally consistent with life and progressive values. The escapist route is not being pursued, but genuine attempts are being made to find realistic and rational answers.

<u>Question:</u> I still feel that in its initial stages any movement has a clear vision, at least of fundamental matters, of what literature should be. But after a while differences arise. Among the Progressive take Manto and Ismat Chugtai and their detractors who dubbed them pornographers. Then there are the conflicting attitudes towards Iqbal. You had your differences with Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi on some of these matters. I would like to know whether they were differences of an organizational nature or differences fundamental to the Progressive Writers' Movement?

Faiz: No, the differences (with Qasmi) took place inside the Movement. When you associate a movement with an organization, there are bound to be some differences of opinion flowing from organizational decisions. So, when after independence, we found ourselves confronted with certain problems that had not existed before, it was but to be expected that there would be differences. Certain organizational decisions were taken which in the view of some of us were not correct.

It also happens that some people tend to take an extreme view and, instead of looking at things from a realistic angle, they tend to become subjective. This can lead to narrow interpretations and shortsightedness. There was always this thing about Manto and Ismat. Some critics even went on to generalise that all progressive writers were pornographers. The fact is that progressivism has nothing to do with pornography or permissive writing. Basically, neither Manto nor Ismat wrote pornography. It is true, though, that their style of writing and some of their themes could sometimes be misunderstood as pornography. I too had my views on the subject but as far as their integrity and their commitment to realism were concerned, they were above reproach. However since, because of these two, attempts were made to, dub the entire Movement pornographic, there were some among us who took a rather extreme position. It was said that Manto and Ismat had nothing to do with the Movement. This is something I disagreed with then, and I disagree with now. However, such differences within a movement are neither new nor unusual.

Question: But in 1949, you parted company with the Movement, while...?

Faiz: No, I did not part company in the manner that is being suggested. It was like this: for the sake of the movement itself, one chose to keep quiet about things one did not agree with. At the time, certain misinterpretations were made with regard to Iqbal. Also, in my view, the attitude adopted towards Manto, Ismat, Qurratulain Hyder and N.M. Raashid was wrong. I never dissociated myself from the Movement because there was nothing wrong with it as such.

Question: Let's turn to your poetry. In Urdu prose there have been some epoch-making events such as the publication of Abdullah Hussain's novel, *Udas Naslen*. But in Urdu poetry, one can't think of a similar event, except when your collection of poems, *Dast-i-Saba*, was published in 1952. How did it affect you? You were in prison at the time. Did this 'event' condition your subsequent poetry, did it create the problem of maintaining standards? Suddenly, your name was echoing everywhere. How did you take it?

Faiz: Well, as far as my 'name' goes, when my first collection, *Naksh-i-Faryadi*, was published, it seemed to me that I had arrived. I was, of course, somewhat surprised at the happy reception of the book. After all, what had I done? Written some verse. But behind *Dast-i-Saba* lay a new experience that of captivity. People identified themselves with it because of the new situation in the country. They perhaps felt the events of the day and the forces behind them as portrayed in the book. To me, it did not really make any difference. Nor was it anything new, because people have always been kind to me. But popular reaction does not affect one's poetry or change its direction. One always writes about what one has undergone and

experienced. *Dast-i-Saba* is nothing more than a mirror of my feelings at the time. It has always been so with me.

It is a question of what one feels. When one feels a particular emotional impact of things in personal, terms, one tries to empathize with others, with events outside oneself. So, one never changes one's course or one's attitude. Nor does one allow oneself to become a prisoner of this or that.

<u>Question:</u> The image of the morning is basic to your poetry. The purity of daybreak, its resplendent light. It is like a dream. You belong to a generation which saw dreams, which worked for their fulfilment, as in the freedom movement. You were travellers through a long night. When we look back, we feel that your generation travelled from one stretch of darkness to another stretch of darkness. In between, there were dreams of morning, but no shaft of light penetrate the gloom.

There have been two consequences of this great betrayal of the dreams of your generation. Either complete escape from reality or bitterness and disillusionment. Your greatness lies in the fact that you have avoided both these extremes. Though there is an underlying melancholy in your poetry, you have retained inner resistance and resilience in your music. In fact, with time, these two elements have deepened. How have you managed to do this?

<u>Faiz:</u> First of all, I do not think that the dream is shattered. The poet Mir said that death itself is no more than a pause, a point of reference from which one moves on. There is always the nation and the country. Secondly, to keep a dream alive, hope is essential. This is instinctive in me. Realism too requires that, while one should not deny the

presence of despair, one should, at the same time, keep faith and hope intact.

Question: This seems a good way of saving oneself from disillusionment, but some writers of your generation became either introverts or screaming propagandists. Have you never experienced this divide? Or do you manage to somehow avoid it consciously?

Faiz: There is no real dichotomy between the conscious and the unconscious. One's unconcious is always involved in whatever one does consciously. Of course, there is a kind of struggle' between the conscious and the unconscious. Perhaps, unconsciously, I too would like to scream out: let's give it all up and sit at home and intone God's name. But then I do not do that. Depends on how much fight you have in you. So, I suppose, the fact that one goes on is due to many factors: a bit of faith, a bit of the inner light, a bit of it from the outside, and then friendships. You move with the people, with the caravan, as it were, and you are not unhappy or sad.

Question: Your poetry is like one long struggle. But it does not violate the norms of the classical tradition. How do you reconcile writing about the problems of today with the old classical modes?

Faiz: What old modes! To me the old and the new, the traditional and the contemporary fall in their proper places in the larger composite tradition of literature. The great advantage or miracle of the ghazal form, for example, is that you can use it to render traditional themes in traditional diction and still be in tune with contemporary reality. The traditional struggle between the mystic and the

sermonising priest is also a contemporary humanistic struggle between authority and the ordinary man.

Question: Your life I mean your poetic life was influenced by the fact that you were jailed twice. Did it in any way limit the canvas of your poetry?

Faiz: No, quite the contrary. Imprisonment brings in a new dimension, a new way in which you look at things. Objects one had not even noticed in normal life, because one was too busy to perceive their ugliness or beauty, appear anew. One's sensitivity is heightened. Then you have much more time in prison. You can look at the world and think about it at leisure. It was in jail that I wrote my poem on Africa and on many other subjects, which I would hot have normally thought about. So, in that sense, when you are in jail, the world outside comes closer or recedes into the distance. Ironically, imprisonment brings freedom in that sense. I feel that the kind of intellectual freedom you experience in jail, you don't experience outside. When you are outside, you are caught up in day to day affairs. You never see the entire canvas. Imprisonment opens the windows of your mind.

Question: A personal question now. Those who are close to you know that your relationship with Alys is not a mere husband-wife relationship, but a long and deep friendship. However, you come from a certain background, with a certain cultural psyche, nurtured over hundreds of years. Don't you sometimes feel (because of the difference in your two backgrounds) that there is a communication gap, that there are things she is not able to grasp or things you are not able to grasp?

Faiz: Yes, one does have that feeling, often, many times, but I think ... after all, it is forty years.... And well, then there are the children. They are there and they are part of the circle of our life together, as much as we two are. We react to our children and they react to us and it so happens that at a certain point distances converge into proximity. They cease to exist. Still, something does remain. Our purely Eastern things, for instance, she does not always understand them, but in forty years, I suppose, she has learnt so much that....

Question: Yes, I see. I have a friend. Salimur Rahman. Teaches economics. He often says that in the end all things become one because of a common denominator, but in the beginning, when you were just married. Did you have a feeling that there was a gap?

Faiz: One did not marry in a day. We knew each other for two or three years. And because she had a certain political mind, and because we had ideological affinity with each other, when we met in Amritsar, where she had come to see her sister, we spent a lot of time together. We felt it would work that we could, make a go of it. So we decided to get married. So, you see it was not a matter of love at first sight.

Question: In your last book *Mere Dil Mere Musafir*, one detects a certain quality, a feeling. It is so different from your other books. It reads like poetry of exile. A feeling of being away from your country, in a physical sense, I mean. Has it brought a new dimension, a new feeling, to your poetry? Are you now part of the international community of exiled poets like Nazim Hikmat and Mahmood Dervesh?

Faiz: In one sense, yes; in another, no. What I have in common with them is physical separation from the homeland. But the difference is that they were forcibly evicted. I was wandering about of my own free will. Nobody has ordered me to leave. I can return whenever fancy takes me. Of course, there is always the sadness of separation from one's homeland, like the sadness of separation from one's beloved. But the helplessness of those two is something quite different. I am not helpless in that way. I will go whenever I so wish.

Question: But you wrote recently: 'And so it has been ordained that we be banished'.

Faiz: Yes, that is true but not literally. I was not ordered to leave. I saw that things were not quite right, so I thought I would take a holiday from the situation. But my situation is different from Hikmat and Dervesh. I am not deprived in the sense in which they are. I can always go home. No one has stopped me. I have the choice. But Mahmood Dervesh and the Palestinian people have not only been individually but collectively banished from their homeland. Their, anguish is greater than mine. Nazim Hikmat was sentenced for fourteen years and had to escape. They cannot go back home. But I am still confident that there are many back home whose love and affection I have. However, the anguish of separation from one's loved ones is not lessened by this awareness. It is there.

Question: You have been abroad by an act of volition, as it were, for the last three years. Are there things you now see from a different perspective? When you place an object very close to your eye, you cannot see it. It becomes hazy. Has distance changed your views?

Faiz: Yes, it is true. From a distance one can see things more objectively, more clearly; but in a personal sense, one is not really involved in what the people back there are going through. So, in a way, your burden is lighter. Were one back home, it would be different.

Question: Your poetic diction, your similes, your metaphors are purely classical, and are part of our traditional poetry. But you invest classical diction with a new meaning. Have - you never thought of using a new language, a new diction, a new idiom, as some people do these days? Have you never felt the need to do so?

Faiz: In every language and that includes Urdu and Urdu poetry there are certain limitations, certain internal parameters. Within this limited framework, there has always been innovation. Mir, Sauda, Nazir Akbarabadi, Ghalib and Iqbal made innovations, changed the idiom, changed the grammar, changed the imagery. But to go beyond that point, well, one would require a much greater talent.

One must see that the distinction between prose and poetry is maintained. Poetry involves bringing things together. Prose involves scattering them. Poetry is a discipline. One has to abide by some discipline. Poetry is in higher planes, prose is one flatland. So, one has to maintain the difference and still say something new. There is no simple formula. One has one's temperament and one's inspirations. I feel that what our tradition has given us, we have not made full use of. There is much that remains to be done. We have not really tried to do so. Our generation has distanced itself from tradition, we do not attempt to discover this apart, what lies hidden in that tradition. To

blaze a new trail, one needs the distinctive manner and style of a very great poet. I am not invested with such greatness. Sometimes, when I cannot say it in Urdu, I try to write in Punjabi, as I have done.

Question: This new Urdu poetry. Are these new poets not overly influenced by the west?

Faiz: Yes, obviously. This began with us as far back as Maulana Hali and Maulana Mohammad Hussain Azad. The poetry they produced in imitation of the west, by abandoning their own tradition, is of no consequence at all. It has no native blood. It is imitation, and imitation is not creative. This does not mean that one should not benefit from poetry written elsewhere. It does not mean that we should not look for new structures in accordance with changed times. We must. The only thing we have to watch for is that we choose forms which integrate with our tradition. The patch must fit and suit the quilt. Poetry is not merely a matter of expressing feelings and emotions. It is like the craft of an artisan. A craft one must know. It is like a musical composition. One has to see if and where a note fits. A plant must have its roots in the soil. A rootless plant cannot flourish. Similarly, the roots of tradition must be kept intact. However, in accordance with changed circumstances, one must continue to prune the plant. It should be recognizable in the contemporary context. So, there are two things: continuity and renovation. Tradition and experiment, there is no laid-down formula or recipe.

Every poet must find his own answers. If you know what you are doing, you will hit the right balance. Take some of our prose poets. Normally, they give up in about four years and come back to traditional poetry. I have - never tried this rigmarole. Perhaps, a few times, come to

think of it. However, I have tried to stay within the framework of tradition and tried innovations where I could. As in religion, there is freedom to interpret the revealed word in accordance with the needs of the age; so it is in poetry. But while interpretation aimed at tailoring things to contemporary reality is allowed, heresy is not.

Question: Some Latin American poets are close to your way of thinking. Do you think poetry can affect the international situation? Does it affect people?

Faiz: Well, to tell the truth, I have not had much to do with poetry written outside, other than English poetry. And English poetry has little to do with our conditions. But in some other parts of the world, it is different. We share their experience and their stress. Our conditions are similar. Many voices you hear from those regions resemble ours. They can learn from us and we can learn from them. But this has only happened to me in the last ten or twenty years. Instead of French, English and German poetry, I have established an empathy with Latin American, Spanish and more recently Palestinian and Arabic poetry. And, of course, African poetry, those people have undergone the same experiences as ours. This is good. We can learn more from them. We can learn from the literature of the societies with which we have cultural and political similarities, compared to countries with which we have little to share.

Question: Garcia Marquez's novel *The Time of the Patriarch* reads like a story which could have happened in our own country. The same repression, the same incidents, the same use of force. So when things like this are translated, they create an effect. What has been the impact of your translations in other languages?

Faiz: Translations are of great benefit. We have translations of literature in our country from Arabic. I have translated some poetry from Turkish, some of Nazim Hikmat's. Now Palestinian literature is being translated. All this helps people to understand their own environment and their own lives. It gives them a new vision. So, in a sense, it all adds to the enlargement of the realm of literature.

Question: A word about poetry today. What do you think of your contemporaries or of those who will follow you?

Faiz: I believe that in spite of the mental confusion and emotional restlessness which prevails today, a great deal of good poetry is being written. It is always difficult to make predictions about youth, because one can never tell how many of those who are writing today will eventually give up. However, it proves that those who say that there is a lack of literary creation are wrong. There are plenty of new writers: poets, critics, and writers of prose. In every branch of literature, much that is new is being produced. There is movement, but it is nothing comparable to what things were like during the Progressive Writers' Movement. So let us say no movement as such has been born yet, but there are signs and waves. Therefore, there is no need to worry about literature. Leave Urdu. There is Punjabi, Baluchi, Sindhi and Pushto. For the first time, people are paying attention to these languages. Vibrant poetry is being written in them. Prose writers are beginning to make their mark, and the caravan of literature is moving on.

Question: In poetry there is always the question of who influenced whom. Is a poet of your stature, who is influencing an entire literature, part of a continuity? Or does he act as an inhibiting influence on new writers who find it difficult to discover a new means of expression?

Faiz: Yes, a poet may influence other poets, but, more important, objective conditions also create a new idiom, a certain kind of grammar, a particular form of expression. The poet who becomes the first to employ these innovations becomes a stylist at a particular time, that is. Then, poets borrow from other poets. Even today, we continue to borrow from Mir and Ghalib so it is a natural process. People borrow from other people and benefit from what others have done. There is nothing wrong with that. It is only natural. It has always been so. And if someone sits down and tells himself that he is going to write in the manner of Josh or Qasmi, or even Faiz, then it is his problem and no blame lies on us. Good writers discover their own path. They pick out from others what they find good, as I take from Ghalib or someone takes from Josh or from Qasmi. It is but natural.

Question: People of your generation had a dream. They were part of a struggle, a movement. Then the dream was shattered, although you say it has not been shattered. You say it was only an interregnum. However, the generation which followed yours doesn't see it quite that way. Those who were born after partition, or who were four or five years old at the time, see a different reality. They see what the politicians have done and what has happened to the country internationally and at home. One doesn't quite see how it is an interregnum. There is poetry of frustration, protest and anger being produced. How do you see it?

Faiz: I do not think it is right to generalize. Good poetry is good poetry, no matter when it is written. Good poetry of today has all the qualities, realism and protest and hope and faith. Since there appears to be no movement in the offing, every individual is discovering his own path to

salvation which is good. I have never thought that I have done something which the younger generation is incapable of doing. Those who have talent will one day distinguish themselves, just like people in earlier generations did.

Question: And now a cliche. How do you write?

Faiz: How does one write? I do not really know how one writes. Sometimes while reading a book, a phrase or a sentence or an image or a rhyme sticks in the mind and, ultimately, ends up in a poem. At times, while listening to music, a certain note or a certain rhythmic pattern leaves a deep impression. Suddenly a line comes to mind. A ghazal first requires the emergence of a rhyming scheme in one's consciousness. One builds on it. For a nazm, one has to think. A line comes first and then you think of the pattern of the poem. It is like an artisan at work. It has to be built. You have to get it in focus. The basic image must be in sharp focus. You have to match things. The music has to be right. No false notes. At time, the experience of a certain event is so sudden and intense that the entire poem is born immediately. At other times, it can take months.

Question: Did you ever want to write something major and were unable to do so?

Faiz: Once or twice, I tried to write a long poem. I wanted to make the dedication to the collection, *Sar-i-Wadi-Sina*, into a long poem, but then I got bored writing it. Another poem in *Dast-i-Saba,* 'A Prison Morning', I thought of making into a long poem, but then I gave up.

Translated from Urdu by Khalid Hasan

Chapter Sixteen

Faiz and his Symbolism

A.Q. Zia

So what
if pen and paper
have been snatched from my hand?

I have
dipped my fingers
in the blood of my heart.

So what
if they have
scaled my lips?

I have
put a tongue
in every mouth of my chain.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the author of above verses, became a living legend in his own times and for that matter of all times to come. He died on November 20, 1984. No one but an artistic genius like him could resent and disapprove of the restraints and restrictions imposed upon the freedom of thought and expression by the governing authorities. He stood in calm defiance of the brutal world and in course of time became the spokesman of human dignity, virtues and social justice.

Faiz was born on February 13, 1911 at Sialkot which is also the birthplace of Dr. Iqbal, the spiritual father of Pakistan and one of the greatest poets, philosophers and thinkers of his time. 'If creating words and shaping them in an orderly form is the chief characteristic of a poet',[1] as Faiz remarked while accepting the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962 at Moscow, then he fitted this description justifiably.

Faiz deserves a respectful consideration in any discussion of our literature as he was one who voiced through his poetry Pakistani nuances and presented its distinctive characteristics. His name and fame will survive as long as our culture survives and Urdu tongue is spoken. He possessed a broad vision of humanity and of man's place in this society. He was aware of the fact that constantly changing criteria of relevance actually determines the course of action for successive generations who reject or accept ideas from the past and then utilize them to illuminate the present and brighten the future. In the past escape from reality resulting in distortion of facts was a common occurrence but not any more and certainly not true in case of Faiz who did his best to get rid of traditional norms and trends and attempted to find a world of his own where he could release his tensions.

Late in the 19th century a reaction against formalism and traditionalism encouraged the rise of a new style and attitude which came to be known as progressivism.[2] It was in a way an anti-thesis of so many things that were appreciated by the traditionalists. It created a desire of rationality, originality and curiosity in literature and initiated modern political activity. The poets could not have the sensitivity to be poets without being affected by the political events of their times. The fullest significance of their poetry was expressed indirectly in non-political verse in a rather metaphorical or symbolic way. In

doing so they rejected the literary traditions which dominated the scene of poetry for a long time. Faiz was one of them.

Progressive Writers' Movement took its roots in Indo-Pakistan region around the thirties. Faiz was one of the founders of the movement. He along with other writers of progressive nature found inspiration not in classical models of perfection but in varied and vital nature of human beings, their attitudes and behaviour. He rebelled against the established conventions, traditions and decadent practices of the society and in fact against everything that had served its purpose and had now become blurred or obsolete. He did not believe in making reasonable interpretation of the vast generalities dear to the heart of poets of an earlier period but in establishing new avenues for intellectual curiosity and diversions.

Under the impact of progressivism Faiz also appeared to be opposed to mechanistic ideas and reactionary tendencies. The conception of a fixed mechanical order was felt by him as a constraint to life and its activities. He did not conceive universe as a machine but something more mysterious, more meaningful and rational. When he peeped into his own soul he found these conflicts, confusions, illusions and challenges. It was his own individuality and sensibility and will which made him to invent a kind of language, expression, imagery and symbols that have never been used in Urdu poetry before. No other poet had dissected those illusions and conflicts through the tools of poetry the way Faiz did. No other poet of Pakistan suffered so much at the hands of traditionalists and bureaucrats as Faiz did.

Obviously, the arena of Faiz's poetry was transferred from the universe conceived as a machine to the society conceived as a well knit organization. There was

no pluralism between his feelings and the circumstances in which he was placed. He felt concerned and sympathetic to all that was happening around him. The entire humanity which is the product of heredity and environment became a laboratory of experimentation and careful investigation for him. New and changed circumstances provided him with new material and substances for his thought and expression. He did not talk about them in a philosophical manner but in a mild, gentle, effective and convincing way. Like Socrates and Virgil he always remained calm, patient, disdainful and understanding.

Each poet has his own unique personality and individuality. Each of his moments has special tone and combination of elements. And it is the poet's task to find, to invent and to create a special language which alone will be capable of expressing his personality, his feelings and his talents. Such a language most often makes use of symbols. It cannot he expressed through direct statements or description but only by a succession of words and images that can be of abstract nature like musical notes and chords, like metaphors detached from their subject. Faiz because of his creative nature and opalescent language became the prophet of a new insight and trend in Urdu literature just as Edgar Allen Poe had become one of the prophets of symbolism in English literary world.[3] Just as Poe's critical writings provided the first scriptures to symbolist movement, Faiz's poetical thoughts formulated what amounted to a new literary programme, taste and truth.

Edgar Allen Poe once suggested, 'Indefinitiveness is an element of the true musical poetry and to approximate the indefinitiveness of music was to become one of the principal aims of symbolism'.[4] This effect of indefinitiveness was produced not merely by confusion between the

perceptions of the different senses. If musical notation is an essential part of symbolism, as Poe suggested, then a vast amount of Faiz's poetry could be considered symbolic. Take a look at his poem entitled Tanhai (Loneliness).

> Again has some one come sad heart no; no one
> May be a passerby, will go some where else. Night declined, the stardust scatters.
> Drowsy lamps waver in the buildings
> Every path, after long waiting, sleeps
> The dust has blurred traces of footsteps
> Put out the candles, take away wine and jug and cup
> Lock up your sleepless doors
> Now no one, no one will come here.

The poet lives in a world of pure intense emotions filled with loneliness and pessimism. This situation is expressed through distinct fine images but not through definite symbols. The reason for this is, as we can understand, to communicate and demonstrate a certain feeling or way of life and at the same time to transfer to others the imaginative habit and energy of his mind and vision. Faiz was basically a poet of commitment and thus he had to communicate with his readers and admirers. To feel the musical rhythm read his poem *Bol* (Speak).

> Speak! your lips are free
> Speak,
> Your tongue,
> Slender body;
> All are still yours.
> Look! in the smith's shop.
> Fierce flames; red irons;

Lock springs open,
Chain links break
Speak, even the brief time
Left for the body and tongue
Is abundant.
Speak, truth still lives;
Speak, say whatever is to be said.

'Remembrances' is another such remarkable poem:

In the lonely desert, my love, trembles
the shadow of your voice, your lip's mirage.
In this desert, front the dust of distance,
Blossom your bosom's jasmine and roses.
From somewhere near rises the warmth of your breath,
Burning softly in it's own fragrance.
Far away on the horizon fall
The spangled dew drops of your glance.
Lovingly, my love
Your caressing memories touch my heart, Although
it is still the morn of separation
Yet, it seems the day has waned
And the night of meeting has come.

Here there is no element of indefinitiveness or confusion of thought. The poem expresses many ideas symbolically but with clarity, lucidity and in a heart warming way.

Symbolism is in fact a critical idiom which has a wide range of meaning. It can be described as a mode of expression which instead of referring to something directly refers to it indirectly through the medium of something else. Symbolism is also not substitution of one object for

another but it is the use of concrete imagery to express abstract ideas and emotions. If W.B. Yeats' conceptual thinking has to be given some thoughtful consideration then 'all great literature is created out of symbols in which observations, statistics and data mean nothing'.[5]

T.S. Eliot in his essay on Hamlet pointed out that symbolism is an expression of emotion in the form of art through a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion.[6]

Stephanie Mallarme, one of the greatest French exponents of symbolism, defined this term around 1891 as the art of evoking an object little by little so as to reveal a mood or conversely the art of choosing an object and extracting from it an *etat d'ame* (state of soul).[7] A symbol from his point of view can also relate to a couple or more elements which may contain a literal reference and a much more greater range of unwritten meaning, implication and emotion. Imagery, form and action may all be symbolic.[8]

Mallarme's disciple, Henri de Regnier, made much the same point when he defined the term symbol as being a comparison between the abstract and the concrete with one of the terms of the comparison being merely suggested.[9] And as Regnier further pointed out, 'because the symbol thus frequently stands alone, with the reader being given little or no indication as to what is being symbolized, symbolist poetry inevitably has a certain built-in obscurity'.[10]

Symbols thus can merge with the expressions of unusual and instructive motifs or patterns of human behaviour and belief that can be changed with primary emotional force. Symbolism can then be said to be an attempt to penetrate beyond reality to a world of ideas, ideas within the poet's mind, including his emotions, or the

ideas that constitute a perfect supernatural world toward which man aspires.[11]

Symbolist movement itself by reason of its origin in France had a deliberate self-conscious aesthetic effect on French social environments. Stephanie Mallarme, Paul Valero, Marcel Proust, Henri de Regnier and many others dedicated their lives to do something with the langugae of poetry which had never been done before.

We should, however, remember that the development of French poetry has been quite different from the development of Urdu poetry in Indo-Pakistan region. Whereas French symbolists were often vague, illogical, and unrelated to reality, Urdu poets were direct, lucid, and appealing. Faiz is a good example of it, but same can be said about N.M. Rashed, Miraji and many others.

Faiz, however, because of, his sympathies and passion with his surroundings exercised his influence in particular upon all the writers of younger generation and became the prophet of a new insight and ideal in poetry. He created a revolution in the imagery of poetry, because he saw a revolution in social trends and literary environments. Let me quote here his poem *Subh-i-Azadi.*

This stained light, this night-bitten dawn
This is not the dawn we yearned for.
This is not the dawn for which we set out
Hoping that in the sky's wilderness
We would reach the final destination of the stars.
Surely, the night's turgid sea will breathe its last
On the inevitable shore.
Surely, the boat of heart's agony will somewhere
Come to a stop.
The enigma of youthful blood, seductive hands
So many forsaken loves plaintive looks.

But irresistible was the radiant face of the dawn
Even though love and beauty were within our reach.
The subtle sorcery of desire the aching tiredness.
They say that darkness has been severed from light.
They say that the goal has been reached;
That the predicament of the grief-stricken
Has radically changed
Ecstacy of union is allowed
And the torment of separation forbidden.
Torn nerves, glazed eyes, heart of fire
There is no cure for the disease of separation.
From where did the morning breeze come
And where did it go?
The earthen lamp shakes its head in despair.
The night is as oppressive as ever.
The time for the liberation of heart and mind
Has not come as yet.
Continue your arduous journey
This is not your destination.
(Tr. Daud Kamal)

The medley of images, the deliberated mixed metaphors, the combination of pessimism with optimism, the bold amalgamation of material elements with spiritual phenomenon, a deep sense of frustration, all these may seem to appear distinctly in this poem. One could easily figure out that Faiz did not produce images which were either unrealistic or far fetched or illogical. It was not until the advent of this type of symbolism in Faiz that Urdu poetry got rid of its figurative and conventional rhetoric and became much more sensible and heart touching. Faiz in this respect became the first precursor of symbolism in

whose poetry more substance, more intellect and more solid imagination were present.

Another striking example of subtle symbolism in Faiz's poetry could be found in his poem *Kuttey* (The Dogs).

The dog, the best friend of man, is the symbol of love, faithfulness and loyalty to his master. In the western part of the world dogs are considered favorite pets. However, in the East they are treated as the meanest, filthiest and humblest creatures that are often let to die out of starvation or neglect. But the same is true of the millions of human beings who are treated worse than dogs. In this poem Faiz has used dogs as a symbol for helpless, shelterless and penniless people who live, suffer and die much more miserably than the dogs themselves. However, the day these dogs (neglected people) will have any sense of self-realization and complete rejection they would rise to the occasion and would not even mind crunching the bones of their masters under their teeth. It was the employment of this type of symbolism and this sort of thought which made Faiz alien to his own contemporaries and an outright rebel.

Symbolism sometimes makes the poetry so much a private concern of the poets that it becomes incommunicable to the readers. The peculiar subtlety and difficulty of symbolism is indicated by the name itself. Martin Foss in his book Symbol and Metaphor on Human Experience defined symbol as a 'fixed representation of the empirical world: clear, exact and useful, while metaphor is a process of tension and energy, manifested in the process of language, not in the single world'[12] in the light of this definition take a look at Faiz's poem *Mulaquat* (A Meeting):

This night, a tree of pain
Greater than you or I;

Greater, for in its branches
Endless entangled caravans of torch-bearing stars
Lost their way.
Thousands of moons under its shadow
Lost their light.

This night, a tree of pain
Greater than you or I;
Yet from this tree, the yellow leaves of these
Brief moments
Fall, and entangled
In your hair,
Appear 'flowers of fire'.
From night's dew, silent moments, like droplets,
Fall upon your brow,
Scattering gems about your face.

This night, dark; but from darkness flushes forth
That stream of blood, my voice.
Under its shadow lights up,
A wave of gold your glance.
Grief of slowly smoldering
In your arms
(Grief, this night's fruit)

If grief enflamed rem our cries, augments,
Firey sparks will burst forth.
We pluck out arrows, pierced, broken in our hearts,
Shot from black branch bows;
With each use make an axe.
But for grieved, heart-shattered people
Their morning will not break on an ill jated sky.
Here, where you and I now stand,
Is the horizon of a bright dawn.

Here, griefs' sparks
Bloom into gardens of morning light:
Here, the sword of the killing grief
Turn to fiery garlands
Of fine-rayed light.

Night's gift, this sorrow,
Will be tomorrow's hope;
Hope, a balm to sorrow
As morning to night.

This poem is a distinctive representation of symbolism in Faiz's collection. The night is equated with a tree of pain and agony and throughout the poem this symbol remains predominant. However, just before reaching to the culmination tree ceases to act as a symbol for darkness, torture and above all night but produces a situation of hopefulness and optimism. This is a digression from one position to another, from symbolism to concrete imagery and calculated effectiveness. The rationality behind this abrupt transition can be found in the basic characteristics of Faiz's approach to poetry. Had he not made a digression then the message that he wanted to convey to his readers that the tree of torture will ultimately bloom into gardens of morning light and delight and night's gilt of sorrow will change into tomorrow's hope and happiness might have become obscure if not obsolete. This also establishes the tact that Faiz is essentially a poet of commitment and communication and not of symbolism.

The symbolic order in a poem is often established by a general correlation between the material and the spiritual, between the visible and invisible and between the real and unreal. Working within this symbolic logic, Faiz wrote a lovely poem entitled *Dareecha* (The Window) in

which the symbol of cross echoes throughout. Its functional comparison with the blood of Messiah and then his resurrection emphasizes the twofold values; one that the symbol represents in itself (objective interpretation) and the other is what it signifies as a projection (subjective interpretation).

Crosses bar my window,
Each stained with savior's blood;
Each desiring union with a god.
On one is sacrificed spring's raincloud;
On another murdered a shining moon;
On a third, a flowering bough cut in halves
On another, the breeze perished.

Every day these loving beauties,
Drenched in blood, enter my chamber of sorrow;
Every day, before my eyes,
These martyrs resurrect.

There is a strange imaginative power behind the conception of crosses. They present an elaborate theory of martyrdom, sacrifice and resurrection, a theory which speaks of human misery, human history and human personality. Crosses are used as symbols of a regular human journey from complete subjectivity to pure objectivity. It is a short but beautiful poem encountering evil under more varied guises. It is filled with touching emotions, heartbreak and soul-wrecking disillusionment.

The symbolist movement, as we understand, was first confined to France and principally limited to poetry. Remy de Gourmet who was eventually to become the champion of this movement attempted to communicate his personal feelings in an unconventional way which was an

impression of novelty and aesthetic thrill. However, it was never the intention of Faiz to start a symbolist movement in Urdu poetry. He even tried to get out of it. Just as French writers Paul Valery and Marcel Proust had grown out of it but were well appreciated, so was true of Faiz who managed to make symbolism flourish triumphantly by transplanting it to the favourable soil of that region but he never identified himself as a part of it. He succeeded in using variety of symbols in his poems such as *Intisab* (Dedication) or *Sarey Wadi-e-Sina* (Sinai Valley), *Ek Shahr-i-Ashob Ka Aghaz* (the Beginnings of a City of Anguish), Teen Awazen (Three Voices) but symbolism is not a distinctive feature of any of those poems or even of other poems where symbols are frequently employed.

Truly speaking, the dimensions and analyses of the nature or symbols and of symbolism are varied. For the Hindu philosopher Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'Symbolism is the art of thinking in images'.[13] 'In making such a suggestion Coomaraswamy was actually sharing the views of Fromm and Bayley, explicit in the titles of their respective works: *The Forgotten Language* and the *Lost Language of Symbolism*'.[14] If this definition stands to any merit then most of Faiz's poetry may be considered symbolic because it was after all not a shadow or a dream but a living revelation of universal truths. It was based upon a precise and crystallized means of expression emphasizing moral order of things, psychic evolution and the ultimate destiny of man. If the essence of symbol is its ability to express simultaneously the various aspects of an idea or a feeling then Faiz might take a lead in this direction, a fact which is quite controversial.

According to many psychologists the symbols exist wholly in the minds of the writers and the true basis of symbolism is the correspondence linking together all orders

of reality, binding them one to another and consequently extending them from the natural order as a whole to the supernatural order. By virtue of this the symbol in itself is expected to be interior to the thing symbolized. This idea is repeatedly emphasized by R. Guenon declaring that, 'what is superior can never symbolize what is inferior, although the converse can be true'.[15]

These observations may be interesting but do not apply to Faiz or to the other poets of Pakistan. To the poets of that sub-continent it was more like a relationship between one process and another, between one object and another and an ultimate relationship between poetical expression and rhythm. It is in this light that we should judge Faiz's poetry or else we would not be able to do full justice to him.

Despite all this, one would have to admit that Faiz is not basically a symbolist poet. Symbolism is not one of chief characteristics of his poetical thought. He is a great stylist but not an outstanding symbolist. It was not his intention to dramatize symbolism by making use of unfamiliar symbols or unconventional imagery the way Stephanie Mallarme, Paul Valery, W.B. Yeats or even T.S. Eliot were able to make their symbolic poetry a fascinating arena of fantasies or fairyland.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz found his subjects and themes for his poetry in the events of his own life and in the environment to which he belonged. He succeeded in dignifying those subjects as perhaps no other contemporary Urdu poet was able to do so. The identification of art with life remained the primary motto of his writing. With a keen and penetrating sense of values, fortified by a style sharp enough to carry nuance of its meaning, he produced one of the most fascinating and heart touching poetry of all times. He left behind rigorous standards of judgement that made

many idols to smash into pieces and many traditions to break down. His concern for good literature extended into his own writing far enough and prepared him to evolve a highly personal and unscrutabte style which gave him a diction and clarity unique among the poets of any language.

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Chapter Seventeen

Faiz and the Dialectics of Revolution

Muhammad Fayyaz

Since its acceptance as a literary medium, Urdu language has been successfully portraying the feelings of the poet, the changes in the flow of time, personal agonies and their collective symbolization, and structural transformations in cultural and social life. However, in general, it was the poet's interiorization of these transformations that usually dominated the idiom and accent of expression and communicativeness. The language, of itself, provided the necessary apparatus: a whole range of symbols, metaphors, signs, and similes that could effectively take cognizance of transformations and convey them with enormity of emotions. In the course of these transformations, while the poet developed new visions of the present and the future, the language also found itself in the midst of taking over new symbolism and mood by either reshaping or substituting foundational meaning of their existing forms and content. This task became less problematic due to the fact that being by origin and historically accommodative and absorptive, Urdu language had to its credit a rich transformative capacity which waited to be mobilized and enhanced under able pens and profound visions.

By and large, however, the poet of the middle 19th and early 20th century rarely thought it gracious to move out of the sphere of personalization of feelings and explore the realm of totalization. The reality of existence was believed to reside somewhere in feelings and their

presentation in words, modes, and expressions of purely personalized nature. The private, subjective world of the poet was a sacred abode which although existed within the world of reality, had its anchorage in a world beyond the immediate and the existential. This self-imposed dichotomization of existence into 'the personal' and 'the collective' seems to have led to segmentation, rather mystification, of reality, thus initiating Urdu language into an ideology of resignation and defeatism. Accompanying this dichotomization, or even some times preceding it, were other such circumstances as the decline of absolutism and its replacement with a foreign colonial rule, a multitude of brutal forces of domination and tyranny unleashed by this rule, and an expansive profanation of cherished ways of life that contributed equally strongly to the subsequent entrenchment of this ideology. The poet, instead of challenging these circumstances, thought it more peaceful to accept the given and take solace in whatever the fate had predestined. This seemingly an uneasy compromise pushed the poet more and more into his private world, made it sound more and more fanciful, so much so that the individual voice of the poet was no more capable of becoming the outrage of the collectivity. The protest, whenever transmitted through traditional symbols, was mild and subdued, for these symbols had themselves lost their agitational spirit, and despite all the blatant injustice and oppression experienced by the poet in a coercive environment, could not generate any appreciable depth or breadth of sharability. Apparently, the sharability was engulfed by a world-view that resigned to despair and predestination and now echoed its own unreality.

To this world-view, however, are some bold exceptions of poets who questioned the very intent of these vested transformations geared into motion by colonial rule,

and made sense of them in a language that sharply locates the sources of repression, and extends their interpretations to a larger domain of totality. Using the classical format of 'ghazal' and 'masnavi' in particular, these poets did not only analyze the sources of human misery under imperialism, but also actively participated in its elimination. A visible beginning was made by Hali (1837-1914) in his *Mussaddis* which was later enriched and enhanced by Iqbal (1877-1938). Some other poets do also provide sporadic instances of this approach toward totalization, yet their concern for human will and freedom seems to have been largely overshadowed by their excessive preoccupation with poetry as merely a form of literature rather than with poetry as a political discourse and critique. The seriousness of concern for a larger totality and its emancipation from alien forces of repression that we see in Hali and lqbal as prime foci, are either completely absent or emptied of a deeper enthusiasm in other poets. In Hali and Iqbal, this concern calls for a sustained collective effort that hitherto remained peripheral to the consciousness of totality itself.

Both these poets, however, had the decline and disintegration of Muslim community (Ummah) as their mark of reference, and continually presented its glorious past as the guiding light for the present. To this end, they, whenever so occasioned, used traditional symbolism and idiom in a way that would unambiguously rekindle the agitational spirit that the symbolism inherently possessed in spite of several decades of over layers of despair and submission. Often, did they (particularly Iqbal) invent new symbolism and style that marked a significant departure from the familiar mode of thought yet was still susceptible to understanding and appreciation. Thus, a movement from personalization to totalization flourished under their pens. Since, however, it concerned itself with a segment of

humanity – Muslim community. It fell short of encompassing totality of the suffering humanity. The need therefore was to overcome this shortcoming and broaden the emancipatory potential of Urdu poetry in order to address to the total lot of the oppressed, and talk about it in a language that, in terms of its intent, takes a lead from Hali and lqbal, but, in terms of its concrete expression, deals with mundane matters of ordinary people suffering anywhere and everywhere under one form of domination or another. And Faiz (1911-1984) seems to have ably handled this task in his poetry.

The humanity, Faiz felt, is much more than any of its single segment, however crucial and sanctimonious that segment may be. Similarly, the particularity of forces that had brought a certain, specific segment under its yoke, in fact had a latent universal character which must be approached and exposed in universal terms. He believed that the universal is embedded in the particular, and quoting Ghalib (1777-1869)[1] in his introduction to *Dast-e-Saba* (1952:9-10), has elaborated on this point to an extent that, for him, the ability to see the one in the other is indeed the true basis of art and poetry, and the one that sets a poet apart from others in terms of his vision and imagination. Accordingly, the real task of a poet consists not in holding this ability to himself but in sharing it with others, thereby inviting them to see what lies bare under the apparent. Once the latent is revealed, the poet should go a step further and launch a collective struggle of hearts, minds, and hands together with others in order to synthesize demands of poetry with demands of collective life, both these demands being often rendered alien to each other by imperialistic ideology. The synthesis should, however, be considered as temporally momentary and, left to itself, would be vulnerable to distortions. It is therefore

obligatory on the part of a poet, exhorts Faiz, to create a self-generative means by which an ever-expanding dialogue between the changing moods of life and poetry becomes a continuous reflective activity, facilitating restructuration and restructuration of both life and poetry. In other words, the synthesis has to be viewed as a dialectical outcome that is all the time in search of stabilization under free will.

Being one of the pioneers who founded the Pakistan Progressive Writers Association (Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Pasand Mussanfeen) which vehemently rejected the 'art for art' thesis and proclaimed the radical alternative thesis of 'art for life', Faiz's life-long mission was to present art (in his case, poetry) and life as two mutually interwoven elements, the one opening itself up to the other thus allowing each other to make sense. He sums up his thoughts on this point in his essay, 'Shair Ki Qadrain', in the following words:

a) Aesthetic value of poetry is largely dependent on poet's other values.
b) Such other values must be nurtured according to their true social significance.
c) Aesthetic value itself being a social value enhances collective betterment. Therefore it is inseparable from other values.
d) As such, the true value of poetry consists in both having aesthetic and social value together.[1]

By such terms as 'social values' and 'collective betterment', Faiz means nothing less than freedom from domination and oppression that can only result from a synthesis of life and poetry.

Faiz arrived at this understanding after having experimented for a decade or so with the romanticist-idealist tendencies of traditional Urdu poetry which see an individual as a voiceless victim of his own longings, his own ideals and utopias which although his own creation stand

away from his being. Alienation and disenchantment are therefore to necessarily flow from these inaccessible points, and as these are the products of individual's own doings, it is the individual alone who must accept the consequences quietly and seek refuge wherever it is in sight in retreatism, escapism, or fatalism. One critic who seems to have concentrated too heavily on his period of Faiz's poetry (largely published in *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* I, think that, 'Faiz represents the inner turmoil of his epoch and this turmoil, in turn, has created in his poetry a lingering shadow of a tragedy hero.' Whose unfulfilled desire for reconstruction constantly agonizes his soul (yet) he trusts his uniqueness and never accepts his defeat even after having been defeated by circumstance after circumstance'.[2] This criticism apparently ignores much of Faiz's poetry that followed the early decade, which advocates many a positive avenue for transcending existential agonies, and ignores also the emphasis that Faiz placed on collectivity and social-aesthetic values.

It was with his poem, 'Mujh Se Pehli Si Mohabbat Meri Mahboob Na Mang' that Faiz explicitly broke off with the idealist-romantic tradition and declared:

اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ

This world knows other torments than of love
and other happinesses than a fond embrace
Love, do not ask for my old love again.
(Tr. Kiernan, 1941:69)

Now Faiz had a new insight into human condition and a new vision of reality as grounded in material life-

situations which inspired him to create poetry that would reflect on the agonies of the oppressed wherever and whoever they may be. He believed that human beings were rational beings and, by nature, just and compassionate, yet such distortions as inequities, injustice, and exploitation were on the rampage. The source of this 'unnaturalness' obviously did not lie in any immutable human attribute: rather, it was the result of what the few had done to the many in order to amass and monopolize wealth and comforts. Being unnatural in origin and consequences, the need, according to Faiz, was, to redistribute material possessions that had gone to the few the illegitimate way:

بے فکرے دھن دولت والے　　　ان کا سکھ آپس میں بانٹیں
یہ آخر کیوں خوش رہتے ہیں　　　یہ بھی آخر ہم جیسے ہیں

Though they are like us,
Why have the rich become immune to worries?
Shouldn't we take their comforts from them
and distribute them among ourselves?
(tr. Kiernan, 1941:73)

Faiz was deeply disturbed by the global propagation of inequality by the few and its passive acceptance by the many. He could well see that the consciousness and cognition of the poor and the exploited, now mystified with dogma and mythology, must be purified: they must be dragged out of their misery and shown the glaring contradictions that surrounded them:

ان دمکتے ہوئے شہروں کی فراواں مخلوق　　　یہ حسین کھیت، پھٹا پڑتا ہے جوبن جن کا
کیوں فقط مرنے کی حسرت میں جیا کرتی ہے؟　　　کس لیے ان میں فقط بھوک اُگا کرتی ہے

> Why do they (people) keep living only in desire of death?
> The lovely fields, whose bloom is bursting out, why does only hunger keep growing in them?
>
> (tr.Kiernan, 1941:106)

To Faiz, it was clear that oppression was neither localized nor was it perpetrated on a certain segment of population: it was indiscriminately stamped on any one anywhere who aspired for freedom and equality. It had become a global phenomenon: labour, peasants, students, mill-workers, and many other honest beings, as Faiz credits them in his dedication to *Sar-e-Wadi-e-Sina* (1971:29-36), had been its victims. All those who fell prey to it, Faiz calls them as the community of the afflicted ('the people of the dust'), whose labour and innocence, vision and valour, have been ruthlessly exploited for centuries. The greed to have more and more of wealth, has instigated the few to invade more and more of markets and labour anywhere on the globe and subject them to their own will and interests. This greed has, in its wake, decimated collective will of the oppressed. In *Tarana* (Anthem), Faiz attempts to resurrect this collective will, make people aware of its power and virtue, and combat opposing forces of imperialism with dare and determination:

اے خاک نشینو اُٹھ بیٹھو، وہ وقت قریب آ پہنچا ہے — اب ٹوٹ گریں گی زنجیریں اب زندانوں کی خیر نہیں
جب تخت گرائے جائیں گے، جب تاج اچھالے جائیں گے — جو دریا جھوم کے اُٹھے ہیں تنکوں سے نہ ٹالے جائیں گے

کٹتے بھی چلو، بڑھتے بھی چلو، بازو بھی بہت ہیں، سر بھی بہت
چلتے بھی چلو، کہ اب ڈیرے منزل ہی پہ ڈالے جائیں گے

Oh! people of the dust, rise!
The time has come when thrones and crowns
will be tossed in the air,
And chains and prisons smashed.
They (the oppressors) want to block the raging river
with straws. How could they?
Keep marching, slain and wounded, we have many
arms
and hands ready to sacrifice,
We will not rest until we have reached the
destination.
(1952:54-55)

The confrontational approach that Faiz thought appropriate to follow, was considered by some of his critics as an extreme approach. They offered nationalism as an emancipatory alternative. Faiz, however, did not feel attracted to this alternative on the grounds that nationalism and national movements may perhaps generate superficial patriotism, but certainly fail to create a consciousness that can see the universal in the particular, demand equality, and fight for dignity and justice. On the contrary, these movements are bound to urge people, particularly people without any adequate means of subsistence, to sacrifice more and more of their rights, to maintain and defend the status quo, to accept uncritically in the name of nationhood more and more mystiques of politics; in short, they would demand subordination of one's will to the will of the national elites who may already be in complicity with international forces of exploitation. In his *Subh-e-Azadi: August 1947* (1952:26-291, 'August 1952' (1952:80-81), 'August 1955' (1956:42-43),[3] and 'Nisar Main Teri Galyoon Ke (1952:82-85), Faiz has dispelled this illusion of

nationalism which saps yet more lustfully whatever little inspiration is left in 'the people of the dust', and unabashedly mythologizes with yet more dexterity and subtlety the real source of their plight and destitution:

نثار میں تری گلیوں کے اے وطن کہ جہاں
چلی ہے رسم کہ کوئی نہ سر اُٹھا کے چلے

> Oh! My homeland, I have all the love for you,
> But, what an irony! no one has the right to walk
> with head up in your streets.
>
> (1952:82)

Given the circumstances where nationalism became an overarching ideology, unfortunately to the advantage of global imperialism, and, also, given Faiz's own life circumstances and imprisonment, the constant struggle that assumed a universal revolutionary form in Faiz's early poetry, now took a queer idealistic turn. Instead of carrying the consolidation of the struggle to its logical limits, Faiz temporarily resigned to disseminating optimism about the immanent revolution (and this signals his first wave of optimism) without keeping up the tone and rage of early writings. Perturbed by this rupture of ever-ascending progressive thought, even though it proved to be of transitory nature, Sajjad Zaheer, while commenting on Faiz's poem 'Mulaqat' (1956:93-98), wrote in his letter of February 21, 1954, from Machh Jail:

> Great poets may change their tone and style under pressures from severe circumstances, yet what they cannot change, is their nature (world-view)... I cannot push Faiz to mix in his poetry the sweat and the blood of

> ordinary people. (That he will do after the spell of idealism is shaken).[4]

And that Faiz did. There is no doubt that years in prison were a devastating experience for Faiz. In many of his letters written from Hyderabad Jail (1951-53), Karachi Jail (1953), and Sahiwal Jail (1953-55), he alludes to this experience with pain, mentions it repeatedly and sincerely that it has mercilessly taken away from him much of his passion and enthusiasm. (See, *Saleebain* Mere *Dreeche Men: Faiz's* 135 *Prison Letters*; 1971). However, with unparalleled honesty, Faiz upholds the conviction that suppression will eventually meet its fateful end that human freedom will ultimately prevail, that a new dawn of peace and equality will finally open itself up to humanity:

صبا نے پھر درِ زنداں پہ آ کے دی دستک
سحر قریب ہے، دل سے کہو نہ گھبرائے

> The morning breeze has knocked on the door of the prison cell,
> Tell the heart, not to worry ... the dawn is near.
> (1952:51)

کب ٹھہرے گا درد اے دل کب رات بسر ہوگی
سنتے تھے وہ آئیں گے سنتے تھے سحر ہوگی

> When will be the end of night?
> Someone told us that a new dawn was about to emerge.
> (1965:64)

غم نہ کر، غم نہ کر،
ابر کھل جائے گا، رات ڈھل جائے گی
رت بدل جائے گی
غم نہ کر، غم نہ کر

The dark clouds will disperse and the night will fade away,
Do not worry, do not worry.
The season will change
Do not worry, do not worry.

(1971:48)

In his later years, Faiz saw rebellions and revolutions smouldering in Asia, Africa, and Latin America all aimed at overthrowing imperialism from within and from without, which gave him the hope that humanity is finally up in arms against tyranny and enslavement, and ready to write its own true history. Many poems in *Sham-e-Shehr-e-Yaran* (1978), *Mere Dil Mere Musafir* (1981), and *Chubar-e-Ayyam* (1982-84) attest to this optimism. (Here lies his second wave of optimism.) This optimism, contrary to the earlier one, is deeply rooted in Faiz's personal experience with the determination of 'the people of the dust' on one end, and with the crumbling 'house of power' on the other in different parts of the world, and most importantly, in his enduring contacts with writers of protest literature that stand in the centre of the battle-field, rather than away from it amid luxuries. Such literature, some of which has been translated by Faiz (1984:469-478; 601-606), dealt with common themes of liberation, restructuration of global order, and internationalization of struggle against imperialistic ideology: its resilience can

well be seen from the following verse where Faiz asserts that an air of catholicity:

جو ظلم پہ لعنت نہ کرے، آپ لعیں ہے
جو جبر کا منکر نہیں وہ منکرِ دیں ہے

> The one who does not condemn tyranny is himself condemnable,
> The one who is not a disbeliever in perpetuation of oppression (by the powerful), is himself a faithless person.
>
> (1984:568)

Faiz left as his legacy a limitless optimism and an incalculable faith in human potentialities. The tradition of politicizing poetry gently initiated by Hali and aggressively nurtured by Iqbal, found in Faiz's poetry its true inheritor which is as deeply committed to the ideals of poecry, as to the ideals of a dignified life.

Notes

1. Ghalib's famous verse captures the essence of 'particular-universal' philosophical outlook reads:

   qatra men Dajla dikhai na de aur juzv men kul
   khel bachoon ka hua deeda-e-beena na hua.
   Translated freely, it would be:

   If one cannot apprehend a body of water (like river Dajla) in the particular, distinctive existence of a drop that is, a universal enveloped in a particular,
   Then that person is devoid of vision, continually wasting his life in playing meaningless children games.

2. Unless otherwise specified, translation of Faiz's and others' Urdu material, quoted in this paper, has been rendered by the author.

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[1] Abullais Siddiqui, 'Faiz Ka Fann-e-Shairi', in Sabir Dutt (ed.), *Fann Aur Shakhsiyyat* (Faiz Number) (Bombay: Nargis Publications, 1981), June Issue, p.417.

[2] Shakilur Rahman, *Faiz Ahmed Faiz Aur Uski Shairi* (Delhi: Star Publications, n.d.), pp.6-7.

[3] The month of August (specifically, 14 August) being the one when Pakistan, Faiz's homeland, came into being, is especially revered and the Day of Independence celebrated officially. Faiz, in the poems mentioned here, reviews progress toward true freedom made year after year, feels disappointed on its absence, and laments official celebration that reinforces nothing else but an ideology of mystification.

[4] Major Muhammad Ishaque, 'Roodad-e-Qafas', in *Zindan Nama* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Karvan, 1956), p.72.

Chapter Eighteen

Towards a Grammer of Politics: An Overview of Faiz's Punjabi Poetry

Muhammad Fayyaz

Politics and power are as inseparable from each other as are power and inequality. True egalitarian societies therefore have never had the need to have politics or its enshrinement in state. On the contrary, societies which superficially claim to have equality without working toward eradication of inequality that proliferates under its aegis consider politics as an inevitable concomitant of social life for no other but the egotistic purpose of legitimizing unequal power distribution. The movement toward creating power differentials and preserving them with suppression of tyrannical proportion seems to have begun with the advent of monetized economy. Gradually, so the history tells us, political and economic power became intertwined: power in one sphere meant also power in the other. The social world of today has witnessed the reality of this diabolic complementarily, and also some of its blatant consequences, in many forms and in many places, the most noticeable being the ever-increasing exploitation of the powerless by the powerful with the cheerful blessing of the state politician.

As is evident from his writings, Faiz is acutely aware of this reality and despite hardships and antagonisms takes upon himself the task of disseminating this awareness among the oppressed and the exploited and also among the fellow-writers. He has, in a style that is both lyrical and revolutionary, captured the intricacies and dynamics of

power in his many verses and critiqued its several components including political legitimation, institutional fabric, tradition of tolerance, and concealment of ideology, which are made to appear by the people in power as innocuous but are intrinsically lethally paralyzing. Coupled with the inherent tendency of power to be cumulative, to be corruptive, and to be self-possessed, politics helps in perpetuating oppression and exploitation. To counteract these tendencies and alliances requires a concerted revolutionary effort both on the part of writers (literary intellectuals) and the oppressed. A poet, as such, owes it to humanity to expose such alliances and critique their consequences: to remain aloof and wrapped up in semantics would be nothing but an unpardonable escapism. Poetry must reflect realities of life however unpalatable these may be, asserts Faiz, and show particularly to the oppressed the magnitude of, and more importantly, the origins of their sufferings. 'Politics is not something separate from life... It is the first and the foremost obligation of liberators and poets to guard the sanctity of goodness, humanitarianism, and truth, and for that engage in relevant political activities'.[1]

It is widely known that Faiz followed this mission of critiquing power and politics enthusiastically and impressively in his Urdu poetry. What is perhaps relatively little known is the fact that his Punjabi poetry which, incidentally, occupies a far less space in comparison to Urdu poetry in his Collection *(Nuskha-Hae-Wafa)*, continues the mission with almost equal commitment and vigour. The disproportionate share of Punjabi poetry, in the words of Faiz, is due to the fact that at quite an early age in his poetic pursuits, 'I was overtaken by an (awesome) realization despite my desire to write in Punjabi, that for one thing I had not mastered Punjabi literature, and for

another, based on whatever I had heard, it was hoping against hope to write like Waris Shah'.[2]

In another conversation, Faiz reveals that he began to write in Punjabi 'quite recently and that, too, to prove to some one who challenged me to write in Punjabi'.[3] When asked to give his opinion on Punjabi language, Faiz made some insightful observations on the relationship of language and life. For instance, argues Faiz, folk poetry can never be accomplished in Urdu, for Urdu is the language of the polis not of the village, be the village in Punjab or around Lucknow. 'Udru is strictly an urban language... I may, if I endeavour, write poetry matching Ghalib's, but never ever the one matching Bulleh Shah's'.[4]

Sighificant and far-reaching as these observations are, it seems fair to say that the Punjabi poetry of Faiz successfully presents a synthesis of folk and urban concerns vocalized in an elegant manner. Urdu form set in Punjabi idiom, in itself, constitutes an experimentation that deserves to be named as an innovation. In his famous poem 'Rabba Sachaya', Faiz presents a discourse between a peasant and the Almighty God-the Almighty who promised the peasant land and freedom but which he is deprived of by the people in power for no apparent reason but his sheer poverty and powerlessness. True believer as the peasant is in the beginning of the discourse, toward the end he is transformed into a skeptic and near-believer who insists that:

میری مُنّیں تے تیریاں میں منّاں
تیری سونہہ جے اِک وی گل موڑاں
جے ایہہ مانگ نئیں پُجدی تیں ربّا
فیر میں جاواں تے رب کوئی ہور لوڑاں

That forces of material existence can easily erode spirituality in circumstances of deprivation and despair is

more than transparent from this discourse. However, this process of radical transformation is not mechanistic: it is conditional upon the mediation by contemplation. What Faiz wishes to emphasize is the well-entrenched maxim that the more one reflects on one's existence and the constraints imposed on it by power and politics, the more one is likely to approximate an authentic self-consciousness. As long as an uncritical submissiveness to power prevails, neither will power diminish nor will a consciousness of emancipated existence emerge.

In another poem, Faiz continues with the theme of true emancipation as enunciated in 'Rabba Sachya'. Using the classical symbolism of 'Hear Ranjah' for the contemporary expression of the much-needed passion for freedom, Faiz notes:

مٹھڑے یار میرے، جانی یار میرے
تیرے قول تے اساں وساہ کرکے
جھانجراں وانگ، زنجیراں چھنکائیاں نیں،
کدی کنیں منداراں پائیاں نیں،
کدی پیریں بیڑیاں چائیاں نیں

The essence of this poem is embedded in a yearning for the true dawn of freedom for which all the sacrifice and suffering became acceptable, for the acceptability, says Faiz, was premised on the belief that the promised dawn will emerge from the long-drawn gloomy night. However, the real dawn is still far removed from reality and the reign of suffering not yet over.

In addition to an enlightened self-consciousness, what also seems to be the means of overcoming this

situation of betrayal and despair is ideological unity and a collective will to thwart oppression. Thus, in another poem, addressing the peasant, Faiz once again reminds him that he is the genuine inheritor of land and a producer of food. If he ceases to cultivate, all these so-called votaries of power will succumb to hunger. The need, then, is to join hands and minds together and face whatever odds raise their heads, to extent.

جے چڑھ آون فوجاں والے
توں وی چھویاں لمب کرالے
تراحق تری تلوار

As from his Urdu poetry so from his Punjabi poetry, it is evident that Faiz has a critical consciousness which he solemnly wants to share with the oppressed in order to illuminate prospects of their emancipation from the treacherous hold of politics and power.

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2. Amrita Preetam, 'Alys Ke Faiz Se Baten', in Khaleeq Anjum, *op.cit.*, p.298.
3. Nusrat Chaudhary, 'Faiz Se Ek Guftgoo' in Khaleeq Anujm, *op.cit.*, p.326.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.326-27.

Chapter Nineteen

Literature and Politics: The Tradition of Faiz

Hassan Gardezi

Faiz Ahmed Faiz stared writing poems when he was a student at Government College, Lahore, a red brick elitist institution whose ivy-clad walls, terraced gardens, and residential quadrangle still remain jealously protected by high walls as the teeming population of the inner city closes in from all sides. The faculty and the heads of this institution were admired for their command of literature, mostly English, mixed marriages, sartorial taste and aloofness from the sweat and struggle of the average Indian. The students mostly came from the families of landlords, rich merchants, professionals and civil servants. For some it was a brief interlude to learn 'culture' before they went back to the family estates or business. Others prepared themselves for the Indian Civil Service, or aspired for a trip to England for a B.A. (Hons) degree from Oxford or Cambridge.

Faiz describes the tenor or the times as lackadaisical, prosperous and festive. The white-collar workers in those days had particularly prospered as a result of jobs created during the First World War. Large contracts for military supplies and catering brought money in the hands of quite a few, even farming paid off well as a result of higher prices for agricultural produce. Romantic literature flourished in this atmosphere of middle-class contentedness. Urdu literary writers were impressed by the 'Asthete' movement in British art. They extolled 'beauty for

the sake of beauty' and 'art for the sake of art.' On the political scene there was more or less a unified nationalist movement operating within the Indian National Congress or with its blessings. Political rallies took on a festive appearance as every city welcomed a national leader such as Mahatma Gandhi or Ali brothers in the midst of flower bouquets and ornamental arches erected for the occasion.

It was also during the 1920s that Bhagat Singh organized his *Ghadar Party* for armed action to expel the British *Raj* form India, and the communist movement gained strength among the working class and the trade unions. The prosperous middle-class Lahorites, however, by and large seem to have reacted to these movements with a romantic, nationalist impulse or admiration from a distance. But interestingly enough Faiz recalls that Khurshid Anwar, who later became a famous musician and composer, belonged to Ghadar Party and used to hide contraband arms and ammunition in the College hostel room occupied by the former.

Such was the environment which influenced Faiz and his early poetry which is part of his first anthology, *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* (Remonstrance). A few examples of poems written in this period are:

'خدا وہ وقت نہ لائے کہ سوگوار ہو تو'
'تہِ نجوم کہیں چاندنی کے دامن میں'
'آج کی رات سازِ درد نہ چھیڑ'

سرودِ شبانہ

May God not bring the time when you are sorrowful.
Somewhere beneath the stars, in the moonlight.

Touch tonight no cord of Sorrow.
Music by night.

A typical theme is illustrated in the following lines taken from the last named poem.

زندگی جزو خواب ہے گویا
ساری دنیا سراب ہے گویا
سو رہی ہے گھنے درختوں پر
چاندنی کی تھکی ہوئی آواز
کہکشاں نیم وا نگاہوں سے
کہہ رہی ہے حدیث شوق نیاز

Life fragment of a dream,
Earth, all a shadow-play?
Slumbering in dense woods
Moonlight's exhausted murmer.
Eyes half closed the Milky Way
Breaths legends of self-surrendering love

These poems are full of romance, beautiful imagery, love and pining for the elusive beloved, the woman of the poet's dreams. In this respect Faiz was also following the tradition set by his elder contemporaries such as Akhtar Shirani, Josh Malihabadi, and Hafeez Jalandhri. In prose the writings of Pitras Bukhari and Sajjad Haider Yeldram complemented the poetic literature of the period.

But times changed quickly. By 1929 the economic conditions became grim once again for the people of India, as for the rest of the world dominated by Capitalism. Never above subsistence level, were the workers and peasants of the subcontinent hit hard by the great depression. The

condition of the educated middle-class was not much better as it swelled the ranks of the unemployed to enormous levels. Although small in relative terms, numbers of jobless ran industrial proletariat into thousands in the industrial areas of Ahmedabad, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. They began to stage massive demonstrations, and were joined by striking underemployed and underpaid workers. In addition thousands of destitute peasants started arriving in the cities in searching for livelihood, as landlords were not interested in producing grain for which they hardly received any price in the market.

Sociologist Desai explains the situation in these words.

> The year 1928-29 witnessed a series of strikes in the country. There was a general strike in the Bombay textile mills involving 150,000 workers. The strike wave reached its peak in 1929 when 531,059 workers were involved in contrast to 131-655 workers involved in 1927. The strike movement revealed the increasing class consciousness and militancy of the Indian working class. Further, strikes were often led by the members of the Workers and Peasants Party, whose political influence was felt among the workers. The working class was developing into an independent social force.[1]

Probably the most disturbing thing about these events for the British masters of India and even for the higher echelons of the Indian National Congress was that the worker's mass demonstrations were taking place under the leadership of their own comrades and under the flags of communist and other leftist parties. The All India Trade

Union Congress was by now well organized and many younger members of the nationalist parties were moving to the left in their ideology.

All these developments sent shock waves to the very foundation of the British Raj. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, spared no occasion to rave against the 'communist threat' to India and 'foreign subversion.' Incidentally some of the known 'foreign subversives' were themselves British citizens, such as Spratt Bradley and Hutchinson, active in the trade union movement. Finally, in March, 1929, thirty two leaders of the worker's movement were arrested from all parts of India and charged under Section 121-A of the Criminal Code carrying sentences of 10 years to life imprisonment for conspiracy to undermine the authority of His Majesty's Government in India. This became famous as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Many journalists were also rounded up among whom was Ramanada Chatterjee, editor of the *Modern Review*, arrested for publishing a book called *India in Bondage*. Bhagat Singh, the leader of the revolutionary Ghadar Party was charged with throwing a bomb and propaganda leaflets at the Central Legislative Assembly and was executed after a brief imprisonment in Lahore. This became known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case. A number of arrestees in this case and elsewhere undertook fasts unto death in protest against arbitrary arrests and some died as a result in jails.

Among the literary circles of India Faiz was not alone to be shaken by these circumstances and to speak out against the sources of oppression. Many of those who wrote in Urdu, as well as in other Indian languages, were awakened to a new reality- a massive oppression and mutilation of the essential humanity and beauty of a people. Faiz's own words best describe the situation:

یہ وہ دن تھے جب یکا یک بچوں کی ہنسی بجھ گئی
اُجڑے ہوئے کسان کھیت کھلیان چھوڑ کر شہروں
میں مزدوری کرنے لگے۔ اور اچھی خاصی
شریف بہو بیٹیاں بازار میں آ بیٹھیں۔

Those were the days when smiles on the faces of children were suddenly extinguished. Ruined farmers moved to the cities to labour, Abandoning their fields and farms. Daughters of very respectable families were forced into Prostitution.

The initial reaction of Faiz as a poet to these changing conditions was a mixture of brooding and melancholy so characteristic of his later poems included in *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* (Remonstrance), e.g.

مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ

Love, do not ask

Faiz feels that this attitude of melancholy and brooding 'reached its end' with a relatively less known poem of *Naqsh-e-Faryadi,* entitled *Yaas* (Despair) which begins with the line:

بربطِ دل کے تار ٹوٹ گئے

The melody of the heart is broken

Actually this was only the beginning of the end, and melancholy and brooding never disappeared from Faiz's poetry as we shall see later. The major new element in his creative effort was a shift from romanticism to realism

which characterizes some of the final poems of *Naqsh-e-Faryadi,* as well as most of his poems included in the subsequent anthologies. It was also this realism combined with sense of outrage at the injustices and exploitation of the working classes which moved him to action whether it was in the context of the Progressive Writer's Association, or the Trade Union Congress. He was pulled ever closer to the immediate struggles of the workers, grief of one's love can no longer be separated from the grief of the suffering humanity, as he wrote:

'غم جاناں اور غم دوراں تو ایک ہی تجربے کے دو پہلو ہیں'

Now Faiz had come to grips with what we know as the progressive tradition of his poetry. Some of the poems written early in this tradition are direct and simple in style, for instance the following verses from a poem:

جب کبھی بکتا ہے بازار میں مزدور کا گوشت
شاہراہوں میں غریبوں کا لہو بہتا ہے
آگ سی سینے میں رہ رہ کے ابلتی ہے نہ پوچھ
اپنے دل پہ مجھے قابو ہی نہیں رہتا ہے

When labourer's flesh is sold in chaffering streets
Or pavements run with poor men's blood,
A flame that lurks inside me blazes up beyond
all power or quenching,
Do not ask its name

Or, the whole poem entitled *Bol* (Speak Up):

بول کہ لب آزاد ہیں تیرے
بول، زباں اب تک تیری ہے
تیرا سُتواں جسم ہے تیرا

بول کہ جاں اب تک تیری ہے
دیکھ کر آہن گر کی دُکاں میں
تُند ہیں شعلے سرخ ہے آہن
کھلنے لگے قفلوں کے دہانے
پھیلا ہر اک زنجیر کا دامن

Speak, for your lips are free,
Speak, your tongue still your own,
This straight body still is yours,
Speak, your life is still your own.
See how in blacksmiths forge
Flames leap high and steel glow's red,
Padlocks opening with their jaws,
Every chain's embrace outspread!

Pure song and lyric has never lost its appeal to middle class educated youth in the subcontinent and even provided a channel of escape from harsh realities of life. The distracters of the Progressive Writers' Movement have also argued that politics and art do not mix. In one of the final poems of Faiz *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*, very simply and beautifully deals with this issue by addressing his 'fellow man,'

میرے ہمدم، میرے دوست
گر مرا حرفِ تسلی وہ دوا ہو جس سے
جی اٹھے پھر ترا اُجڑا ہوا بے نور دماغ
تیری پیشانی سے ڈھل جائیں یہ تذلیل کے داغ

تیری بیمار جوانی کو شفا ہو جائے
گر مجھے اس کا یقیں ہو مرے ہمدم مرے دوست!
روز و شب، شام و سحر میں تجھے بہلاتا رہوں
میں تجھے گیت سناتا ہوں، ہلکے شیریں
آبشاروں کے، بہاروں کے، چمن زاروں کے گیت
آمدِ صبح کے، مہتاب کے سیاروں کے گیت
تجھ سے میں حسن و محبت کی حکایات کہوں

If my words of solace were medicine that could bring
Revival of your stricken and shadow-haunted brain,
wipe from your brow the wrinkles
that shame and failure write.
And mend the pale consumption
that wastes away your youth.
if I knew this for certain,
my fellow man, my friend!
Day and night I would cheer you,
morning and evening make
Songs and new songs to please you,
honeyed, heart-quieting,
Songs of cascades and spring tides and flowery meadowlands,
Of breaking dawns, of moonlight,

Or of the wandering stars,
Or tell you old romances of shining eyes and love.

Faiz is known for his humility and loaths to talk about his role as a political activist. But it is significant that in the Punjab the foundation of the Progressive Writer's Association was laid in Amritsar in middle 1930s and Faiz was a founding member. He continued to participate in the gatherings of the Association up until the early 1950s after its centre of activity had shifted to Lahore.

But in the meantime the political scene changed once again. The Second World War started in 1939. At first the general reaction or Indian communists and left progressives was that it was one of the wars of national expansion waged periodically by the European capitalist-imperialist powers in which the colonial subjects had no reason to become involved. British government in India began once again to recruit young workers and peasants into the army often by use of extremely high-handed methods which further alienated the people from the British war effort. But in 1941 Hitler attacked Russia and drove his forces deep into that country at a tremendous loss of Russian lives. This bitterly divided the left movement in India with one segment in favour of giving priority to the struggle against facism, the ultimate enemy of the people, while the other segment continued to regard capitalist and the imperialist oppressors as the main enemy and would refuse to join hands with British at any cost. Faiz was among those who took the former course and joined the British Indian Army's public relations and welfare wing in 1942. Many other progressive writers took jobs in the All India Radio and civilian public relations departments or the government. A number of communists and nationalists who

continued to oppose the war were detained under war emergency regulations.

Between 1942-1947, when Faiz and a number of other progressive writers were, for all practical purposes, away from the literary and political scene, events moved quickly in the subcontinent. Demand for Pakistan enunciated in March 1940 in Lahore gained rapid support among the middle-class educated Muslims and as time went by, among Muslim workers and peasantry. The Indian National Congress launched its 'quit India' movement. Japan made amazing military advances in East-Asia reaching the eastern borders of the subcontinent by 1942. Sobhash Chandar Bose, and ultra-nationalist leader, long disenchanted by the compromising politics of the Congress, turned up in Singapore and organized the rebel Indian National Army (INA) and at the end of the war when the officers of this rebel army returned to India they were given a heroes welcome by the people. During the war the Railway workers staged highly successful strikes and halted the total operation for days. Other workers in industrial centers followed suit. After the war there were also effective peasant rebellions in Kerala and Talingana. In February 1946 there was a serious rebellion among the naval forces of the British Indian Navy.

All these events, plus the fact that England emerged for the Second World War as a weaker power, thoroughly exhausted in its human and material resources, forced the post-war Labour government to relinquish its direct colonial rule over India. Only days after the naval rebellion of February, 1946, the British Government announced the formation of a Cabinet Mission to come to India to work out the transfer of power to the leadership of Indian Nationalist parties. Momentarily it appeared that India was poised on the verge of a revolution. Wisdom of the

leadership in the West, including counsels originating from Washington, dictated the relinquishing of rule to the bourgeois feudal, leaders of the nationalist parties to preserve the essential continuity of trade and commercial relations of colonial times. The transfer of rule was accomplished under a hurriedly conceived plan accommodating many contradictory compromises and leaving many internal disputes unresolved. In the middle of August 1947, two independent states of India and Pakistan came into being. Intensive communal riots had begun some months before this date, but shortly after the proclamation of independence, both countries were enveloped by a holocaust of murder, rape and arson. To make matters worse, the new rulers had no vision for a true liberation of their people. An era of graft, corruption and scramble for grabbing evacuee property, import and export licences began.

The whole thing caught the Progressive Writers' Movement unawares. Many of the writers were themselves uprooted and forced to make new starts in life. Under these conditions, Faiz returned to Lahore and to civilian life, to became editor of the *Pakistan Times*, a progressive leftist newspaper at the time. One of his first poems written after independence was Freedom's Dawn, in which the poet remonstrates:

یہ داغ داغ اُجالا، یہ شب گزیدہ سحر
وہ انتظار تھا جس کا، یہ وہ سحر تو نہیں

This leprous daybreak, dawn nights fangs have mangled.
This in not that long-looked for break of day.

But the poem is not an admission of defeat, rather a resolve to continue the march towards the desired goal of true freedom.

چلے چلو کہ وہ منزل ابھی نہیں آئی

(Let us go on, our goal is not reached yet)

For a while after the creation of Pakistan there was hope that things will change for the better and the reassembled group of progressive writers was producing vigorous critiques of society. Faiz was not only using his journalistic talents through the pages of the *The Pakistan Times* to crystallize progressive opinion on national and international issues, he was actively involved in political action as vice-president of the Trade Union Congress and secretary of the Pakistan Peace Committee. He was also active in the Progressive Writer's Association of Lahore, along with Sajjad Zaheer, Saadat Hassan Minto, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Arif Abdul Mateen, Khudeja Mastoor, to name only a few. All these writers along with their Indian counterparts such as Krishan Chandar, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Khushwant Singh, Amirta Preetam and Asmat Chughtai were influencing a whole generation of younger writers by their unrelenting exposes of class oppression, sexism, bigotry of religion and custom, militarism and economic exploitation. Their modes of expression were extremely varied, yet they had in common a boldness to experiment with the older and modern literary techniques, elegy and oblique allusions as in the case of Faiz or the merciless realism of Minto's short stories which made him a victim of a series of criminal charges by the government on grounds of obscenity. But this phase of the development of progressive literature did not last very long. It soon became clear that the new rulers did not care any more for freedom

of expression than did the colonial masters. To make a living by writing has never been an enviable plight to be in, particularly in the subcontinent. Progressive writers soon found themselves blacklisted by the government controlled media and reactionary press. Besides government started frequent use of press ordinances to prevent the publication of periodicals which patronized progressive writers.

In March 1951 the Progressive Writers' Movement in Pakistan received a major setback. Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sajjad Azheer were arrested and jailed for four years on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government. The trail was held in camera, so the exact nature of the charges will never be known. Implicated in the charges were also a few military officers and Communist Party of Pakistan, which was promptly banned, and an ex-military officer who was involved with rebel Indian National Army (INA) during the Second World War. During the trial and after, the reactionary press and a literary organization by the name of *Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq* (The Circle of Connoisseurs), took full advantage of the situation by floating rumors that Faiz will be hanged and anybody who belonged to Progressive Writers' Association was working against the 'integrity' of Pakistan.

While Faiz was behind the bars, the rulers of country entered into military pacts with the United States. Imperialism with a new face was now haunting the people of Pakistan.

These developments are reflected in the poems of Faiz written in jail and included in the two antohologies *Dast-e-*Saba (The Zephyr's Hands), 1951, and *Zandan Nama* (Prison Thoughts), 1956.

The jail sentence provided Faiz with time to rethink his ideological commitments as well as to refine and perfect his poetic style. In his own words:

جیل خانہ عاشقی کی طرح ایک بنیادی تجربہ ہے۔ چنانچہ اول تو یہ ہے کہ ابتدائے شباب کی طرح تمام حیات یعنی (sensations) پھر تیز ہو جاتی ہیں اور صبح کی پو، شام کے دھندلکے، آسمان کی نیلاہٹ، ہوا کے گداز کے بارے میں وہی پہلا سا تحیر لوٹ آتا ہے۔ دوسرے یوں ہوتا ہے کہ باہر کی دنیا کے وقت اور فاصلے دونوں باطل ہو جاتے ہیں۔۔۔ تیری بات یہ ہے کہ فراغتِ ہجراں میں فکر و مطالعہ کے ساتھ عروسِ سخن کی ظاہری بناؤ نکھار پر توجہ دینے کی زیادہ مہلت ملتی ہے۔

(Being imprisoned is a basic experience, similar to falling in love. Firstly, all your sensations become sharpened as it happens when you enter the period of your youth, the glow of the sunrise, the shadows of the evening, the blue of the sky, the soft touch of the breeze regain their impact on your curiosity. Secondly, the intimacies and distances of the outside world become negated. Thirdly, the leisure of separation from the object of your love provides opportunity to attend to the sensual ornamentation of the Muse).

Faiz's prison poetry retains all the elegance of earlier poems, but in these verses his thoughts struggle more and more with dualities, and new syntheses emerge. To his imprisonment he reacts initially with the affirmation:

متاعِ لوح و قلم چھن گئی تو کیا غم ہے
کہ خونِ دل میں ڈبو لی ہیں انگلیاں میں نے
زباں پہ مہر لگی ہے تو کیا کہ رکھ دی ہے
ہر ایک حلقۂ زنجیر میں زباں میں نے

If ink and pen are snatched from me, Shall I
who have dipped my finger in my hearts blood complain?
Or if they seal my tongue, when I have made
A mouth of every round link of my chain?

The ever-present question of relationship between art and politics reappears. (Faiz does not pose the question explicitly in this manner). Faiz is aware of his poetic genius. Removed from his struggle outside the prison, a voice within him speaks thus in the poem *Shorish-e-Barbat-o-Nay* (Lyre and the Flute):

اب سعی کا امکاں اور نہیں پرواز کا مضمون ہو بھی چکا
تاروں پہ کمندیں پھینک چکے، مہتاب پہ شب خوں ہو بھی چکا

No spur left now for endeavour,
Gone ambition of soaring,
we have done.
With throwing a noose to catch the stars,
With laying an ambush on the moon.

But a second voice in the same poem asserts:

یہ بزمِ چراغاں رہتی ہے، اک طاق اگر ویراں ہے تو کیا

Matters not if one niche is dark,
When all the place, is ablaze with light

That place ablaze is the abode of all humanity, where in spite of oppression and tyranny, struggle for

freedom and peace never ends. Even within the four walls of the prison there is plenty of beauty for the poet in the passing sights and shadows to warm his heart, in contrast to the unfulfilled lives of those who live by tyranny and injustice. In a poem replete with rare imagery Faiz brings home this contrast. To quote a few lines from *Zindan Ki Eik Sham* (A Prison Evening):

شام کے پیچ و خم ستاروں سے
زینہ زینہ اُتر رہی ہے رات
یوں صبا پاس سے گزرتی ہے
جیسے کہہ دی کسی نے پیار کی بات

———

دل سے پیہم خیال کہتا ہے
اتنی شیریں ہے زندگی اس پل
ظلم کا زہر گھولنے والے
کامراں ہوسکیں گے آج نہ کل

Step by step it's winding stairway
Of constellations, night descends
Close, as close as a voice that whispers
Tenderness, a breeze drifts by.

One thought keeps running in my heart
Such nectar life is at this instant
Those who mix the tyrant's poison
Can never now or tomorrow win.

Imprisonment for Faiz meant a sudden separation from his day to day struggles and political activities to

improve the lot of his people and his homeland. For him this experience was similar to being removed by force from one whom you have loved dearly. So in much of his jail poetry, which is a good half of his life's literary work, he is addressing his homeland as *Laila-e-Watan* (Darling Country), the same way as a forelorn lover will address his beloved. In a famous poem he expresses this sentiment in these words:

نثار میں تری گلیوں کے اے وطن کہ جہاں
چلی ہے رسم کہ کوئی نہ سر اُٹھا کے چلے
جو کوئی چاہنے والا طواف کو نکلے
نظر چُرا کے چلے، جسم و جاں بچا کے چلے

Bury me, oh my country,
Under your pavements

Where no man now dare walk
With head held high

Where your true lovers
Bringing you their homage
Must go in furtive
Fear of life and limb.

This is how Faiz finally reconciled his politics and his art. He protests, but his protest is in the language of a lover, and which regime in the world would banish love songs from a country? Especially when these love songs are so lyrical and so beautiful in artistic craftsmanship. Besides, the protest is not addressed to a particular regime, it is addressed to tyrants in general. A poem which illustrates this is dedicated 'To those students who

gave their lives for peace and freedom', written in the 1950s, the martyrs referred to could as well be those who died in the Kent State University U.S.A., in 1970 or in the cities of Nicaragua in 1978. A few lines of the poem will illustrate:

یہ کون جواں ہیں ارضِ عجم
یہ لکھ لٹ
جن کے جسموں کی
بھرپور جوانی کا کندن
یہ کون سخی ہیں
جن کے لہو کی
اشرفیاں، چھن چھن، چھن چھن،
دھرتی کے پیہم پیاسے
کشکول میں ڈھلتی جاتی ہیں
کشکول کو بھرتی جاتی ہیں
یوں خاک میں ریزہ ریزہ ہے

Who are these
Free givers whose blood-drops
Jingling coins go pouring
Into earths ever-thirsty
Begging-bowl pour and run

Filling the bowl brim-full
What are they? land of their birth,
These young self-squanderers whose limbs golden store
Of surging youth
Lies here in the dust shattered.

In 1955 Faiz was released from the prison. Sajjad Zaheer who was released at the same time, returned to India, the Progressive Writers Association in Lahore was now reduced to a fledgling organization, with a few younger writers holding the line. The ruling classes were engaged in bitter infighting for the control of the state machinery and deviously generated wealth. Faiz confined his activities to participation in more or less approved art circles, besides writing some film songs and script. He also undertook a series of travels abroad and was in Russia in 1958 representing Pakistan in the Afro-Asian Writers Conference, when Martial Law was declared at home and General Ayub Khan took over power. The good Generals' administration ordered the arrest of all those who for one reason or the other were listed in the secret service files since the British rule and still living in Pakistan. The result was that Faiz was promptly arrested on return to Pakistan only to be released a few months later for lack of evidence of any wrong-doing.

As the aftermath of Pakistan's first Martial Law settled and Ayub Khan formed a civilian government, Faiz was reinstated in the eyes of the officials, he was now treated more like a poet-laureat rather than a militant radical. The Afro-Asian and Third World movements were gaining strength and Faiz was looked upon as a spokesman for Pakistan in the international conferences organized in connection with these movements. The Progressive Writers' Association collapsed totally under Ayub regime's intensified persecution and blacklisting of its members. Faiz seems to have taken the position that the movement had served its purpose. He kept himself aloof, surrounded by his circle of friends and admirers, frequently appearing in officially or semi-officially sponsored art councils and festivals. In 1962 he was awarded Lenin Peace Price. Jail

and even beatings by hired goons were now the fate of some younger writers like Habib Jalib or Ustad Daman, who directly exposed or challenged specific acts of high-handedness by the Ayub regeime.

Today, a whole new generation of militant and politically active writers is carrying the banner of art by the people, of the people. Their style is more folksy than ornamental, more direct than oblique and their critiques of society ever more pungent. They have closer ties with the workers and peasants, arrests and jailings are more common experience for them than was the case with the writers involved with the post-Second World War Progressive Writers' Movement. They are to be seen more frequently in workers rallies and demonstrations than in literary societies. The circle of the Connoiseurs *Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq*, where reputed progressive writers of a previous generation, such as Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, found their ultimate refuge, has not appeal to them. In a statement of 1970 Faiz explains the relationship between art and politics thus:

۔۔۔لفظ سیاست سے بچنا یا اسے چھوت سمجھنا ایسی حماقت ہے جس سے خود اپنے ہی نقصان کا احتمال ہے۔ رہا تحریک کا خالص سیاسی ہونا تو وہ پھر سیاسی تحریک ہو جائے گی اور ادبی تحریک کے لئے یہ بات یاد رکھنے کی ہے کہ اسے ادبی تحریک ہی ہونا چاہیے۔ نہ سیاسی اور نہ غیر سیاسی۔ یعنی سیاست سے فرار بھی نہ ہو اور سیاست میں ملوث بھی نہ ہو۔

> (It is stupid to be alarmed at the word politics or regard it untouchable; you will do so at your own peril. If you want pure politics in a movement than it will only be a political movement, and for a literary movement it is well to remember that it

should remain a literary movement, neither political, nor a political. That is to day there should neither be escape from politics, nor immersion into politics).

Ironically some of the greatest poems of Faiz were written when he was immersed in politics or was serving periods of penance for his alleged or actual political acts. William Morris, a master of decorative arts and a formidable literary figure in the 19th century England was ignored by the later-day critics because towards the end of his career he took to full-time political work. Jean-Paul Sartre in the 20th century France was offered the Nobel Prize Sartre for literature, but spurned it and took to political activism on Marxist-Leninist lines. The present generations of politically active writers in Pakistan who have been introduced to Ho Chi Minh's and Mao-Tse-Tung's poems find it hard to separate political activism from literary productions.

Faiz's tradition in the Progressive Writers' Movement is best represented in poems composed up to the publication of *Zindan Nama* (Prison Thoughts) (1956). In his later works the allusions to political reality of the times appear infrequently and much more veiled in the artistry of his diction and metaphors. Today, under Martial Law for the third time, the people of Pakistan once again face a grave threat to their fundamental human rights. Maybe new directions will again appear in Faiz's Poetry. His concern is in any case reflected in an open letter circulated by him earlier this year on the responsibilities of the country's writers in view of the present crisis of survival.

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November 3-4, 1978. University of Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

Notes

English translations of poems are taken with minor word changes from Victor Kiernan, *Poems by Faiz* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1973). Prose statements by Faiz are taken from Urdu works:

- Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Dast-e-Teh-e-Sang* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Karwan, 1965).
- Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Mata-e-Loh-e-Qalam* (Karachi: Maktaba-e-Danial, 1973).

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Chapter Twenty

Culture, Literature and Social Praxis

Abdul Q. Lodhi

Thousands of people read Faiz. Everyone interprets his writings within the context of his or her own social and material conditions, a context which includes each person's ideological orientation and class affiliation.

Reading Faiz is a unique experience for most people. The text is powerful and cannot be ignored. It communicates and conveys a message, yet it is important to understand not only what the text says but also what it does not. That is, the theory and praxis which are not so obvious yet are an essential part of all his work. Reading Faiz is a source of inspiration and pleasure. It is also a very involved and intense intellectual activity which requires that one goes far beyond semantics.

In my reading of Faiz, I have discovered three sets of premises pertaining to human beings, their culture and role in history as writers. In this paper I shall make an attempt to articulate the argument that these premises belong to the theory and philosophy in which Faiz's work is grounded. These premises are important because they provide us with a context to read the text and understand its meanings and message which are often wrapped in simple words. Here is an example:

آج اِک حرف کو پھر ڈھونڈتا پھرتا ہے خیال
مدھ بھرا حرف کوئی، زہر بھرا حرف کوئی
دل نشیں حرف کوئی، قہر بھرا حرف کوئی
حرفِ الفت کوئی دلدارِ نظر ہو جیسے
جس سے ملتی ہے نظر بوسۂ لب کی صورت

اتنا روشن کہ سرِ موجۂ زر ہو جیسے
صحبتِ یار میں آغازِ طرب کی صورت
حرفِ نفرت کوئی، شمشیرِ غضب ہو جیسے
تا ابد شہرِ ستم جس سے تبہ ہو جائیں
اتنا تاریک کہ شمشان کی شب ہو جیسے

There is no doubt that text itself is very powerful and to a great extent self-explanatory. Language materializes thought, as Marx said. In this poem, Faiz stresses the importance of 'words', which are expressions of love and lust, affection and anger, devotion and disgust. Words also express individual and collective will.

This poem was written in 1977. Let us read it within the context of the political circumstances of the period. With the military takeover, this was the beginning of another oppressive and repressive regime. The poem unfolds its meanings and message further and further within the context of changing political realities. Out of context the semantic autonomy may trap us within the structural fallacy' i.e. we might fail to understand the meaning of the poem, if we are preoccupied only with words, lines, and their forms.

These three sets of theoretical premises reveal and establish the real meanings of the text. They universalize it by freeing it from temporal and spatial boundaries. Such universality gives Faiz's poetry a unique character, in addition to the fact that Faiz liberated it from formal traditional rules and 'fixed poetic forms'. He creates metaphors and similes which are unique and powerful. For example:

رات یوں دل میں تری کھوئی ہوئی یاد آئی
جیسے ویرانے میں چپکے سے بہار آجائے
جیسے صحراؤں میں ہولے سے چلے بادِ نسیم
جیسے بیمار کو بے وجہ قرار آجائے

Let us study these three sets of premises. As I proceed I shall give examples from Faiz's poetry and essays to demonstrate their connection to his writings. Often, these premises are clearly and explicitly stated in his work. On many occasions, especially in his poetry, he uses metaphors and similes which in my judgement make his position even more clear.

The first set of premises covers the characteristics and qualities which belong to human beings, their dispositions and desires. For Faiz, ordinary people are the most important subject of history. Their pains and pleasures are his concerns. Economic and social justice, freedom, equality, peace and restoration of human dignity and respect along with love and beauty, are recurrent themes of his poetry and prose. The evidence of his love and concern for ordinary and oppressed people is found throughout his work. For example, this unfinished dedication-poem informs us who these people are.

آج کے نام
اور
آج کے غم کے نام
آج کا غم کہ ہے زندگی کے بھرے گلستاں سے خفا
زرد پتوں کا بن
زرد پتوں کا بن جو مرا دیس ہے

دردکی انجمن جو مرا دیس ہے
کلرکوں کی افسردہ جانوں کے نام
کرم خوردہ دلوں اور زبانوں کے نام
پوسٹ مینوں کے نام
تانگے والوں کے نام
ریل بانوں کے نام
کارخانوں کے بھوکے جیالوں کے نام
بادشاہِ جہاں، والئ ماسوا، نائب اللہ فی الارض
(دہقان کے نام)

People are born free. They must determine their own destinies both as individuals and as collectives. Cooperation and care are necessary parts of human growth and development. As a matter of fact, human existence demands peace. Human beings produce and share for their collective survival. Under normal and natural circumstances, productive relations must be based on the principles of equality and social justice. No one, including women, children, the elderly, and disabled should be oppressed and exploited. While labour is an essential part of human existence, and it must not be appropriated, history tells us that for centuries, from slavery through feudalism and on to advanced capitalism, patriarchy, racism, colonialism and imperialism have oppressed a large part of humanity for the sake of dominant and ruling classes.

عاجزی سیکھی، غریبوں کی حمایت سیکھی
یاس و حرمان کے دکھ درد کے معنی سیکھے
زیردستوں کے مصائب کو سمجھنا سیکھا
سرد آہوں کے رُخِ زرد کے معنی سیکھے
جب کہیں بیٹھ کے روتے ہیں وہ بیکس جن کے
اشک آنکھوں میں بلکتے ہوئے سو جاتے ہیں

ناتوانوں کے نوالوں پہ جھپٹتے ہیں عقاب
بازو تولے ہوئے منڈلاتے ہوئے آتے ہیں
جب کبھی بکتا ہے بازار میں مزدور کا گوشت
شاہراہوں پہ غریبوں کا لہو بہتا ہے
آگ سی سینے میں رہ رہ کے اُبلتی ہے نہ پوچھ
اپنے دل پر مجھے قابو ہی نہیں رہتا ہے

It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to delve into an analysis of dynamics of oppressive systems. But it may be said here that along with hunger and ignorance, superstition, religion, magic and science have played an important role in the subjugation of the masses. More recently, discipline and obedience have been ensured through education and training. People are intimidated by ever growing technologies of oppression. They are silenced, and on many occasions they are violently suppressed. Colonialism and dictatorship strip them of their dignity and self-respect. For Faiz, restoration of self-respect, self-confidence and breaking the silence imposed on people for centuries were necessary elements of the struggle against oppression and exploitation. In a poem *Kuttay* (Dogs) he wrote:

یہ مظلوم مخلوق گر سر اٹھائے
تو انسان سب سرکشی بھول جائے
یہ چاہیں تو دنیا کو اپنا بنا لیں
یہ آقاؤں کی ہڈیاں تک چبا لیں
کوئی ان کو احساسِ ذلت دلا دے
کوئی ان کی سوئی ہوئی دُم ہلا دے

Faiz knew very well that reviving self-respect and class-consciousness were not easy tasks in a society dominated by feudal lords and priests, financiers, industrialists and often the military. Yet, he made a life long commitment to bring a message of freedom and instill a sense of worthiness to people. At the same time he penned those words, he also wrote:

بول، کہ لب آزاد ہیں تیرے
بول، زباں اب تک تیری ہے
تیرا ستواں جسم ہے تیرا
بول کہ جان اب تک تیری ہے
بول، کہ سچ زندہ ہے اب تک
بول، جو کچھ کہنا ہے کہہ لے

In Faiz's poetry of resistance, there is no room for compromise. Freedoms of speech (and writing) are integral parts of the struggle. The ability to speak against the tyrant meant several things: it challenged the legitimacy of the hegemony of the ruling class, it helped to articulate the aspirations of people, it restored and reinforced self respect and self-confidence, and it brought about solidarity. In *Tarana* (Anthem) he advocated direct action and stated:

اے ظلم کے ماتو لب کھولو، چُپ رہنے والوں چُپ کب تک
کچھ حشر تو ان سے اُٹھے گا، کچھ دور تو نالے جائیں گے

Despotic regimes and tyrants do not give up their power easily, nor voluntarily. Faiz steadfastly and persistently fought against colonialism, fascism, and all other forms of oppression. He believed in the victory of

protest, and continued to believe so whether in or out of prison, whether in or out of his country. He continued to write, insisting that as a spokesman on behalf of the people, he could not be silenced.

متاعِ لوح و قلم چھن گئی تو کیا غم ہے
کہ خونِ دل میں ڈبولی ہیں انگلیاں میں نے
زباں پر مُہر لگی ہے تو کیا کہ رکھ دی ہے
ہر ایک حلقۂ زنجیر میں زباں میں نے

And he pledged that:

ہم پرورشِ لوح و قلم کرتے رہیں گے
جو دل پہ گزرتی ہے رقم کرتے رہیں گے

The second set of premises covers culture and ideology: particularly, the role of languages and literature in challenging the legitimacy of the hegemony of exploitative systems. Let me state the fundamental premises outlining linkages of culture and ideology to means of production. The basic material needs, e.g, food, shelter, clothing and footwear, are fulfilled in the course of production. The same process creates culture e.g, art, music and literature as well as the fundamental values of a society. Art, music and literature fulfil the expressive needs of a community. In a fair and just society, social and material needs of all the people are equally met. Culture is neither a by-product nor can it be separated from the process of production. People express their ideas, feelings and emotions in art, music, dancing, language and literature. In a community of equals, culture belongs to everyone. It is an expression of their hopes and desires.

Culture in this sense is a set of needs which must also be fulfilled. This is not the case in exploitative systems of relations, where ownership and control of means of production and wealth concentrates in the hands of a small number of families. Dominant classes in patriarchal, feudal and capitalist societies monopolize the culture and the means of cultural production while at the same time de-culturizing the labouring classes.

The act of appropriating productive labour also constitutes the appropriation of culture. The ruling classes decide the value of labour and who gets jobs. They decide cultural values as well. That is, moral and social standards, codes of everyday behaviour, definition of rights and wrongs, etc. They also control the access to expressive components of the culture, i.e, art, music and language and literature. Ideas articulated as ideologies and beliefs have great influence and power over the hearts and minds of people, especially when the people are in a state of fear, ignorance and poverty. The text, spoken as well as written, attains a certain degree of life of its own. Many times the text is reified within a given social and economic context so as to reproduce the established hierarchy of relations. Thus the text, having been produced, in turn governs and shapes the thought processes of people. If they are not able to analyze reason or argue because they have not been taught to do so, they can easily drift with the dominant ideological currents. It is this fetishism of text which progressive writers must challenge. The ideological and cultural hegemony must be destroyed to liberate humanity from the yoke of social and economic exploitation and oppression.

Political domination hinges on the cultural and ideological hegemony of the ruling classes, which in turn, ensures obedience and discipline. Repression and coercion alone are not sufficient for eliciting obedience of the

oppressed; consent of the oppressed is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of oppressors. This consent is ensured through institutionalized training. Religion, family, schools, mass media, work and prisons all become part of the mammoth machinery of oppression. Hunger, fear and ignorance make innocent people vulnerable to the tactics of ruling classes.

Text divides almost everything into binary categories: god-devil, right-wrong, order-disorder, obedience-disobedience, capitalism-communism, and good-bad, so on and so forth. All other options disappear. Truth and falsehood are prefabricated. Writers are the producers of the text. On the one hand, they create myths and mythologies, fantasies, and superstitions. On the other hand, they in many instances, reinforce fear, anger, anxieties, and insecurities. Progressive writers raise the consciousness of people by exposing the realities of everyday life.

In an exploitive system such as capitalism, contradictions produce classes and class antagonism. There is no reason to believe that langauge and literature would escape this struggle. If some intellectuals or writers are engaged in the production of literature which creates the status quo and legitimizes it, there are progressive writers who confront the system against all odds. The oppressors may persecute progressive writers, but they cannot silence them.

چند روز اور مری جان! فقط چند ہی روز
ظلم کی چھاؤں میں دم لینے پہ مجبور ہیں ہم

There is a need to delve in a bit further into a discussion of culture. It is generally assumed that everyone knows what culture is. The definition of culture may

include many things. Let us start from a widely accepted notion that values are prime components of all cultures. What are these values? How are they constructed? Who established the priority of these values?

Culture is not a monolithic entity in any society no matter how homogenous it may claim to be. The hegemony of a dominant culture should not be confused with uniformity and homogeneity of a culture. Cultural plurality is a common feature of all societies, at least since slavery. If we are looking for some universal common denominator of the definition of culture, than we must begin with the premise that culture belongs to people, and must, therefore, be part of their life. In the words of Faiz:

> 'Human culture as values and means, expresses aspirations and desires of all people. It allows them to write, sing, draw, and paint freely and without fear. Freedom from external or internal domination is an essential precondition of human culture to evolve.'

The hegemony of dominant ideologies, beliefs and practices such as patriarchy and racism must not be considered normal or natural values. Tradition and history may establish or even legitimize oppressive values, beliefs, and practices, they may even appear to enjoy societal approval and acceptance. But do they conform to fundamental human covenants: human equality, dignity and freedom? Was it morally right to burn widows? Is it right to oppress women, appropriate their reproductive and productive labour? Are there any grounds to accept the notion of genetic superiority of any race over the other? Is there any legitimization to strip aboriginal people and blacks of their way of life and push them into perpetual

poverty? Is there any ethical principle which allows dehumanization and exploitation of labour?

Anthropology has led us to believe that cultural hegemony and people's culture is one and the same thing. Social science has blindly accepted the preposition that values are constant categories and value judgements are unscientific, and biased, but as Faiz recommended:

> '...it is necessary to distinguish between the form, the technique and skills, manifested in national (and regional) culture, which are largely contributed by its gifted and conscientious artists and writers and its social and ideological content which is largely determined by the nature of its social structure and the class dominating this structure.... It is utterly important to correctly discriminate between culture and trash, between form and content, and between what is totally progressive and what is basically reactionary,'
>
> (Faiz in Lodhi, Forthcoming)

Anthropology and sociology limited their conclusions on the basis of so-called empirical observations, in the name of science and objectivity. But they forgot to ask why a small number of individuals oppressed and exploited the vast majority of people.

Culture is a complex whole of a multitude of varying values, beliefs and practices. Some of them may even be contradictory and oppressive. It's because cultural production is very closely tied to the nature of the relationship will the means of production. Centuries of domination of exploitative relations from slavery, feudalism to advanced capitalism and colonialism, combined with

sexism and racism have infected what we call culture with values, beliefs, and practices contrary to all human rights.

What should be done?

Cultural transformation seeing the only viable solution.

Cultural change and cultural development must redefine values, beliefs and practices in accord nce with human rights. The oppressive values, beliefs and practices must be replaced by those which reflect aspirations of all people. These values must be disseminated and celebrated. Cultural development means that these values must be accessible to all people. Art, music and literature are not the property of the dominant classes, because they belong to all the people.

How do we achieve cultural development? There is a dire need to rearrange economic developmental priorities in such a way that they are congruent with the aspirations of ordinary people: peasants, workers, women and children. Their betterment, freedom and welfare must be a genuine goal of economic development.

This brings me to the third set of premises pertaining to writers and their role in economic development and human liberation. Faiz gives us a theory of praxis, which at the same time is a theory of literature and of cultural development.

Cultural development is not a solitary phenomenon. It cannot be carried on isolated from the struggle against economic injustices and oppression. Oppression denies people their basic right to participate in the political and economic life of their communities. It is the most serious obstacle in cultural development. Faiz elaborates this notion in terms of four problems.

> '*First*', he says, there is the problem of
> salvaging from the debris of their shattered

national cultures. Those elements which are basic to natural identity, which can be adjusted and adapted to the needs of a more advanced sound structure, and which can help to strengthen and promote progressive social values and attitudes. *Second,* to reject and discard those elements which were relevant to a backward and outmoded social structure, which are either irrelevant or repugnant to a more advanced system of social relationships and which hinder the progress of more rational, enlightened human values and attitudes. *Third,* to accept and assimilate from imported foreign and western cultures those elements which can help to elevate national culture to higher technical, aesthetic, and intellectual standards. *Fourth,* to repudiate those elements among these imports which are deliberately aimed at promoting degeneracy, decadence, and social reaction.'

(Faiz in Lodhi, Forthcoming)

The following discussion focuses on progressive writers and their contribution to the struggle for human liberation and cultural development. These writers have played a vitally important role in shaping the history of their societies. Ernesto Cardenal, Cesar Vallejo, and Pablo Neruda in the west and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Nazim Hikmet and Yannis Ritsos in the east, are examples of some of the great poet-philosophers. I can, add to this list a large number of other Afro-Asian, black, women and Palestinian writers and poets, whose works constitute protest and resistance against oppression.

Probably the foremost qualities of progressive writers include commitment and the courage to speak the truth. They suffer the wrath of oppressive regimes but they would not give up their struggle. Faiz drew a clear distinction between progressive writers and the traditional intellectuals in his poem 'Edher Na Dekho'. Progressive Writers endure pains of prison and exile. They will give their lives but will not compromise with the oppressor.

اُدھر بھی دیکھو
جو حرفِ حق کی صلیب پر اپنا تن سجا کر
جہاں سے رخصت ہوئے
اور اہلِ جہاں میں اس وقت تک نبی ہیں
اُدھر بھی دیکھو
جو اپنے رخشاں لہو کے دینار
مفت بازار میں لٹا کر
نظر سے اوجھل ہوئے
اور اپنی لحد میں اس وقت تک غنی ہیں،

Progressive writers free themselves from the preoccupation with form, words, sounds and lines. They have tasks to complete and messages to communicate. It does not mean that their writings are in any way inferior in literary standards. On the contrary, most of the best works belong to progressive writers.

Progressive writers are part of their communities. They share the pleasures and pains of their people. Their work reflects the aspirations of their people. There are a number of ways in which they and their writings contribute to social change and cultural development. I will discuss them with reference to Faiz's poetry, which is an ideal example of poetry of protest, resistance and praxis. The

progressive writer incorporates suffering and plight of working people, women and children.

اَن گنت صدیوں کے تاریک بہیمانہ طلسم
ریشم و اطلس و کمخاب میں بنوائے ہوئے
جا بجا بکتے ہوئے کوچہ و بازار میں جسم
خاک میں لتھڑے ہوئے خون میں نہلائے ہوئے
لوٹ جاتی ہے ادھر کو بھی نظر کیا کیجیے
اب بھی دلکش ہے ترا حسن، مگر کیا کیجیے

It does not mean that beauty, love and happiness are alien themes for them. Faiz's poetry includes many lyrics, where beauty and love are as much a part of his poems as hunger and disease. Faiz blended these themes in his poetry, reminding us that we are human beings and that our needs cannot be restricted to material needs alone. Affection, love and devotion are an integral part of human relations.

دشتِ تنہائی میں، اے جانِ جہاں، لرزاں ہیں
تیری آواز کے سائے، ترے ہونٹوں کے سراب
دشتِ تنہائی میں، دُوری کے خس و خاک تلے
کھل رہے ہیں، ترے پہلو کے سمن اور گلاب
اُٹھ رہی ہے کہیں قربت سے تری سانس کی آنچ
اپنی خوشبو میں سلگتی ہوئی مدھم مدھم
دُور۔ اُفق پار، چمکتی ہوئی قطرہ قطرہ
گر رہی ہے تری دلدار نظر کی شبنم
اس قدر پیار سے، اے جانِ جہاں، رکھا ہے
دل کے رخسار پہ اس وقت تری یاد نے ہات

So on and so forth. You may also add here his many gazals.

The progressive writers have a huge task of rebuilding the confidence of people and infusing a spirit of action. For example, collective action is necessary for the revival of self-respect. Furthermore, consciousness-raising requires solidarity and optimism. Poetry is an important medium for consciousness rising, for rediscovery of the self and restoration of human dignity. Social praxis, consciousness and freedom are moments in history which must occur simultaneously. Faiz's poetry brings these moments together thereby releasing social energy for collective struggle against oppression. He says,

> 'This is, in brief, what literature has bequeathed to the present and the coming generations. It has furnished them with a mirror of their own identity, a code of rational beliefs in humanism, freedom and justice, a climate of feeling and sensitivity towards human suffering and human pain, an articulate battle cry against cruelty and oppression, a repertoire of tender songs of love and compassion, of beauty and truth.'
>
> (Faiz, in Lodhi, Forthcoming)

Conclusion

As an epistemological unity, the three sets of premises constitute a theory of literature, culture and social praxis. These propositions are interrelated. The preceding discussion underscores a number of points which have important implications for social planning. In the first place, we find that the human consciousness and self-determination are utterly important components of human

nature. This means, that all people, regardless of their race or culture, have the right to equally participate in making decisions, policies and programmes which affect their life.

Secondly, we have noticed that this theory challenges the conventional notion of culture and consensus. It introduces two very important variables in the equation; one, the social stratification based on gender, race, and class, two, hegemony of a dominant culture and ideology. It also raises serious doubts about the theory and methodology of bourgeois social sciences.

Thirdly, Faiz proposed a genuinely people-oriented definition of economic development. He elucidated the linkages between literature, cultural and economic development. It is utterly necessary to make distinctions between what is genuine culture and what is not. Finally, Faiz assigned a role to intellectuals in general and writers and poets in particular, which requires a very high degree of commitment to cultural and economic development. He argued that they play a central role in the struggle for human liberation.

ہر اک دور میں ہم، ہر زمانے میں ہم
زہر پیتے رہے، گیت گاتے رہے
جان دیتے رہے زندگی کے لیے
ساعتِ وصل کی سرخوشی کے لیے
دین و دنیا کی دولت لٹاتے رہے
فقر و فاقہ کا توشہ سنبھالے ہوئے

جو بھی رستہ چُنا اُس پر چلتے رہے
مال والے حقارت سے تکتے رہے
طعن کرتے رہے، ہاتھ ملتے رہے
ہم نے ان پر کیا حرفِ حق سنگ زن
جن کی ہیبت سے دنیا لرزتی رہی
جن پہ آنسو بہانے کو کوئی نہ تھا
اپنی آنکھ اُن کے غم میں برستی رہی
سب سے اوجھل ہوئے حکمِ حاکم پہ ہم
قید خانے سہے، تازیانے سہے
لوگ سنتے رہے سازِ دل کی صدا
اپنے نغمے سلاخوں سے چھنتے رہے
خونچکاں دہر کا خونچکاں آئینہ
دُکھ بھری خلق کا دُکھ بھرا دل ہیں ہم
طبع شاعر ہے جنگاہِ عدل و ستم
منصفِ خیر و شر، حق و باطل ہیں ہم

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Chapter Twenty One

Translating Faiz

Naomi Lazard

Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the distinguished Pakistani poet, the most important contemporary poet of India and the subcontinent, died in Lahore on November 20, 1984. The last time I saw him was in April when we worked together in London, beginning the translation process on fifteen poems. He was in excellent spirits, looked very fit and trim. I, who had always worried about him felt relieved. I looked forward to seeing him again in London, perhaps here in New York, perhaps in Pakistan. We talked of someday going to India.

None of this will happen now, I alone will carry the events of our meeting, the decision to translate his poetry into English, the numerous and intense conversations on poetry in general and on his work in particular. I am left with all this and also with the work of translation, which I will continue.

Death is the eggshell that clarifies the poet's work. Though Faiz's poetry is almost unknown in this country, the opposite is true on the other side of the world. For many years the finest musicians have composed music to his poems. When he read at a *mushai'ra,* the present day version of the ancient contest or agon in which poets contended in recitations, fifty thousand people and more gathered to listen, and to participate. In our culture poetry is occasionally set to music but is usually a form of high art, not for popular consumption. In the Hindu and Moslem

world it is different. People who barely have an education know Faiz's poetry, not only because of the songs using his lyrics but also the poems themselves, without musical accompaniment. This is testimony to the oral tradition of their culture but also to the universality of his appeal. Faiz, in the years following World War Two, in which he fought in the British Indian Army, made himself the spokesman of his people. He was, by the British act of partition, a Pakistani, but his people were the people of all India, Pakistan, and the entire subcontinent. Everyone who knows any poetry at all in that vast region knows of Faiz.

Faiz became the spokesman for his people by many and continuous acts of courage and conviction. When he became editor of the *Pakistan Times* he used that position to speak in prose as well as poetry for peace and social justice. He made himself known as an opponent of oppression. He incurred enmity. In 1951 he was arrested, faced a sentence of death, and was sentenced to four years in prison. This was only one of three sojourns in a cell. Much of his time in prison was spent in solitary confinement. Some of the poems I have translated were written under those conditions.

Faiz became the spokesman for his people in another way too. Instead of taking high posts as lecturer or professor, he dedicated himself to teaching illiterate people. He was blasé in his disregard for the blandishments of life. He identified himself with the masses of the poor. One incident illustrates that: when we were saying good-bye after our time in Honolulu I asked for his address. He told me I really didn't need it. A letter would reach him if I simply sent it to Faiz, Pakistan. The reason? He had helped found the postal worker' union. They were his people. They knew where to find him anytime.

So this is where Faiz came from when we met in Honolulu in the winter of 1979. We had both been invited to an international literary conference sponsored by the East-West Center. I have an official photograph, but according to my memory the conference sessions were much more crowded than that. The countries represented were Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, a concentration of Pacific Basin countries, and, of course, the United States. Across the bottom of the photograph the following legend is printed: Workshop on the Interaction of Cultures in Modern Literature. We are a casual but unsmiling group, standing in a double line on the lawn, dressed in our summer shirts and pants. Faiz is in the front row. He has a serious expression on his face, almost a frown, and the effect of the sun which paid us a rare visit that afternoon. His shirt is not tucked in. a pen is clipped to his shirt pocket. His forehead is high and gleaming.

What the photograph doesn't show lives in my memory, a series of scenes, vignettes, tableaux, and the entire montage of those weeks in Honolulu.

Memory: Faiz at the big conference table smoking cigarette after cigarette, prefacing his remarks with choked laugher. No one was immune to his charm. Very quickly he was established as the spiritual leader of the group. Who was this man whose observations and humor struck such a chord of response in my spirit? When he spoke in his particular variety of English, fluent and cultivated, accented in the most astonishing places, I listened with all my heart.

We got to know each other quickly in the limbo, the never never land produced by a forced stay on a desert island. We were a couple of shipwrecks along with all the others in the swirling sea, clinging to each other for companionship, for our heads. The trade winds went crazy

that winter bringing tempests, downpours, driving rains, sudden showers. The rains came again and again. At the same time the automated sprinkler system of the East-West Center turned itself on and we picked our way, mostly through mud and sheets of rain, to the next session, the next meal, the evening activity. We tired not to get caught in the wide swath cut by the swish of water from the sprinklers, but we were often slapped with that water as well, as we sloshed across the grass with sodden feet.

I appointed myself guardian to Faiz. He needed one. We had been given rooms in a dormitory building, and while I walked up three flights of stairs to get to mine. Faiz could hardly make it up the two flights to his, His breathing frightened me. Sometimes he had to stop and rest at every tread. I demanded that he be given a ground floor room.

That evening we celebrated this victory by leaving the East-West compound for dinner. We sat in a booth eating pasta that was certainly not *al dente*, and during the course of that meal decided to begin the project of translation of his poetry. It was, we noted, a most natural thing to do. After all, weren't we present at a conference being held in honor of the interaction of cultures? I knew by this time that Faiz was one of the great poets of the world. I had read his copy of the translations of his work done by Victor Kiernan. My only question was this: Could I re-create well enough, could I render the passion and quality of his work in English? 'I can try.' I said. So it began.

From then on we had no more idle time. Whenever we had a moment, we rushed to his room or to mine, took our places facing each other across a table, and worked. We established a procedure. Faiz gave me the literal translation of a poem. I wrote it down just as he dictated it. Then my real work began. I asked him questions regarding the text.

Why did he choose just that phrase that works that image, that metaphor? What did it mean to him? There were cultural differences. What was crystal clear to an Urdu-speaking reader meant nothing to an American. I had to know the meaning of every nuance in order to re-create the poem.

From the beginning this work of translation has been a process of discovery for me. I have learned what my own language can and cannot do. I have also learned that I have infinite patience for translation, as I do for writing my own poems. I have learned that it doesn't matter how long it takes, how many transformations a poem must be brought through, until the English version works in the same way that a poem I have written myself works. It must be faithful to the meaning Faiz has given it. It must move in his own spirit, with the same feeling and tone. It must have the same music, the same direction, and above all it must mean the same thing in English that it means in Urdu. I have learned how crucial it is to find the verb, the active verb for the occasion. And I have learned again how necessary it is to throw away those crutches, adjectives on the left hand and adverbs on the right.

Describing the translation process is difficult in the same way as trying to describe the process of writing a poem. It is neither a scholarly nor an academic procedure. There is a great difference between writing about poetry and writing poetry. Much of the actual work of writing cannot be described because it is not conscious and it is not controlled. If it were conscious and controlled it would not be poetry. I have to limit myself, therefore, to discussing the conscious part of this process, a vital, but in the end a small part, the concrete wall from which it is then possible to make the leap into poetry.

One of the first poems Faiz gave me is called *Spring Comes*. Here is the poem as Faiz gave it to me.

Spring comes; suddenly all the time returns
all my young days that expired with our kisses,
that have been waiting in Limbo, come back
every time the roses bloom with your fragrance,
and the blood of your lovers.
All my misery returns.
all my melancholy of suffering of friends,
drunken after embraces of women beautiful as the moom.
The book returns replete with the heart's suffering.
The questions left unanswered.
Spring comes.

This is a small poem, delicate, infused with the feeling of a certain, very specific, kind of pain, the old pain that flowers suddenly with the right season, even after a long time has gone by since it made its last appearance. I needed to make each image specific and to heighten the diction in order to make the poem dramatic in English. I asked Faiz what he meant by 'the book' (line nine). He said it was a ledger in which experience is recorded. This was a relatively simple poem to recreate. Here is the final version.

Spring comes, suddenly all those days return,
all the youthful days that died on your lips,
that have been waiting in Limbo, are born again
each time the roses display themselves.
Their scent belongs to you; it is your perfume.
The roses are also the blood of your lovers.
All the torments return, melancholy
With the suffering of friends,

Intoxicated with embraces of moon-bodied beauties.
All the chapters of the heart's oppression return,
All the questions and all the answers
Between you and me.
Spring comes, ready with all the old accounts reopened.

'The War Cemetery in Leningrad' is an example of a much more difficult problem. A poem of great feeling, written after Faiz visited the site; it is also short, very compact, with not a word or image to spare. Here it the literal text.

On cold stone slabs
grey stone slabs
flowers are sprinkled
like a smattering of fresh, warm blood
The stones are all nameless
but every flower carries the name
of some unknown sleeper
and someone weeping in his memory
Finished with their duty
Shrouded in their blood
All the sons are fast asleep
The mother alone is awake
Weaving the garland of her sorrows.

What were those flowers? Carnations, tulips, and roses. Who is this mother? She is a statue, larger than life, watching over the dead and buried soldiers. What is this garland? It is a stone garland part of the sculpture. I had to find or invent a form tight enough to correspond to the one Faiz used in the original. Here is the poem in its final form.

These dabs of living blood
are carnations and tulips
sprinkled on the ice cold stone.

Each flower is named for one
of the unforgotten dead,
and of someone who weeps for him.

These men have finshed their work;
there is the testament of the flowers
and the woman carved in granite.

She is their mother now;
she makes them all small again,
watches them sleep forever.

Only she is awake, draped in her hand
garland, weaving and reweaving
her other garland of sorrows.

A natural problem that comes up over and over again in translating from a literal text is the one of making it more specific, since the literal text is usually a general summation of the original meaning in the poetry of Faiz this problem is intensified because his language in Urdu is singularly devoid of active verbs. Images and passive constructions abound. My work involves finding active ways of expressing what Faiz has expressed more passively in Urdu. There is also the problem of a certain construction that is prevalent in Urdu poetry that is exemplified in phrase such as these cities of pain, land of isolation, wave of light, disturbance of hope. These phrases are contained in the poem that follows. The trouble with this construction is that it becomes boring in English. It has been my work to

change this construction whenever I can into language that is more active, more specific, and clearer. Here is the literal version of:

> On some distant horizon a wave of light begins to play
> and in my sleep the city of pain awakens
> And the eye (eyes) become restless in sleep
> Over the timeless land of isolation
> morning begins to dawn
> On some distant horizon a wave of light is playing,
> a snatch of song, a whiff of perfume, a glimpse of a beautiful face
>
> pass by the travelers
> bringing the disturbance of hope.
> I fill the cup of my heart
> with my morning drink,
> mix the bitterness of today with the poison of yesterday,
> and raise a toast to my boon companions
> at home and abroad
> 'to the beauty of earth, the ravishment of lips.'

I wasn't able to eliminate all of the phrases I referred to earlier without violating the spirit and the meaning of the poem. However, most of them were transformed into more active constructions. Here is the final version. I'd like to note here that Faiz wrote this poem out of intimate experience, when he was a prisoner in solitary confinement. Knowing this, what is striking about the poem is its almost unutterable sweetness, a melting sweetness that has nothing to do with sentimentality and is a million miles away from being saccharine. This

sweetness, uncut by rancor or despair, is characteristic of Faiz's poetry. It expresses the quality of his heart, a largeness and generosity of spirit. Under the worst of circumstances something in his essential nature held fast. It is this quality in his poetry that first struck me.

On the distant horizon a wave of light
begins to play, in my sleep I live
in the city of loss. My eyelids
flutter in their restless dream
as morning moves forward
over the loneliness, the country without borders.
A wave of light is dancing
over that distant horizon.
The merest retrain, the ghost of perfume,
the beloved face glimpsed for a moment,
torture me with hope, the final disturbance.

They arrive and leave,
travelers who have no time to stay.

I fill the cup of my heart
with my morning drink, today's gall
mixed with yesterday's bitterness.
I raise a toast to my friends everywhere,
here in my homeland and across the world:

'let us drink, my dear ones, to human beauty,
to the loveliness of earth.'

Memory intervenes here. Shortly after that spaghetti supper when we decided to begin project Faiz and I ventured out again one evening. He wanted to find a restaurant that served North Indian food. We found one. It

looked expensive, but we decided to splurge. The stipend we were receiving, twelve dollars a day for food, wouldn't cover the price of a meal there, but we were desperate after so many meals in the East-West Center commissary. In that happy mood brought on by recklessness we chattered to everyone.

Just as we were about to leave the restaurant a stranger rushed in and embraced Faiz. The bus boy, a Pakistani, had caught the name, Faiz, and this news spread quickly. In the weeks that followed we came to know this stranger well. He is Ijaz Rahman, a physician who has lived and worked in Honolulu for many years. His hospitality is legendary. From that night his home was headquarters for Faiz; the Pakistani community in Hawaii, an enormous one, gathered there to greet their poet, dine with him, sit on the cushions on the floor of the living room, anywhere, and just simply be there within voice range of Faiz.

Another poem, 'When Autumn Came,' must be read as a political poem. In Pakistan, under the censorship of the various dictatorships, including the present one, it is impossible to call things by their names. This is a poem that characterizes this situation and calls for its end.

And then one day such wise autumn came
naked trees of ebony torsos stood arrayed
with yellow leaves of their hearts
scattered all round on roadways.
Whoever willed trampled them underfoot
and not even a moan was heard.
Songster birds of dreams, imaginings.
when they lost their songs
became strangers to their voices,
fell into the dust all by themselves.
And the bird-hunter had even strung his bow.

Oh, God of Spring, have mercy
Bless these withered bodies with the passion
of resurrection,
their dead veins with blood,
Let some tree flower again
Let some bird sing.

The passage that gave me most trouble is the part that begins: 'Songster of birds of dreams, imaginings.' down to 'and the birds-hunter had not even strung his bow. 'What was difficult for me was to render this particular construction that links the loss of their songs to their becoming strangers (exiles) to their song. Here is the final version.

This is the way autumn came to the trees
it stripped them down to the skin,
left their ebony bodies naked.
It shook out their hearts, the yellow leaves,
scattered them over the ground.
Anyone at all could trample them out of shape
undisturbed by a single moan of protest.

The birds that herald dreams
were exiled from their song,
each voice torn out of its throat.
They dropped into the dust
even before the hunter strung his bow.
Oh, God of May, have mercy.
Bless these withered bodies
with the passion of your resurrection;
make their dead veins flow with blood.

Give some tree the gift of green again.

Let one bird sing.

The poet who wrote these poems is now dead. He is mourned by millions of his compatriots. I am still trying to come to terms with this loss. I have the translations already done, and I am the sole repository now of our experience together, meeting, finding what bound us as poets and friends, the continuing work that forged those bonds closer. Faiz had left the legacy of his work for the world, and to me the legacy of an extraordinary companionship that leaped across the borders of our separate cultures. We never could have imagined that January 1979 in Honolulu that the conference called in the name of the interaction of cultures would produce this collaboration.

This fall I embarked on the study of Urdu. My Christmas present to Faiz was to have been a letter with his name written in Urdu script, signed with mine, also in Urdu.

Instead he is gone. That letter will never be written.

One final poem, I don't have the original, literal version.

How will it be, the day death comes?
Perhaps like the gift when night begins,
the first kiss on the lips, given unasked,
the kiss that opens the way to marvelous worlds
while, in the distance, an April of nameless flowers
agitates the moon's heart.

Perhaps in this way when the morning
green with unopened buds begins to sway
in the bedroom of the beloved,
and the tinkle of stars as they rush to depart
can be heard on the silent windows.

What will it be like, the day death comes?
Perhaps like a vein screaming
with the premonition of pain
under the edge of a knife, as a shadow,
the assassin holding the knife,
spreads out with a wing span
From one end of the world to the other.

Whichever way death comes, or whenever,
in the guise of a disdainful beloved
who is always cold,
there will be the same words of farewell to the heart:
'Thanks God it is finished, the night of the broken-hearted.
Praise be to the meeting of lips.
The honeyed lips I have known.'

In his poetry, in his steadfast service to his people, in the memories he has left in millions of hearts everywhere and in my own heart, Faiz will continue to live.

(New York, December 1984).

Chapter Twenty Two

Introduction – Poems of Faiz

Victor Kiernan

Poets in this century, like leaders of nations, have emerged from some unexpected nooks and corners. Faiz Ahmed's forbears were Muslim peasants of the Panjab, that green patch between mountain and desert, between middle India and inner Asia. His father, born with the instincts of a wanderer, set off in early life to Afghanistan, where he rose high in the service of the Amir 'Abdul-Rahman,' and acquired some of the habits of a feudal grandee. Having fallen foul of his royal employer and escaped in disguise, he turned up in England, where his advent aroused curiosity in the highest circles: Afghanistan was always a sensitive spot in the perimeter of the empire. Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, a bizarre exchange for Kabul and Kandahar, made a lawyer of him, and he returned at length to his birthplace to practise: not with great financial success, for lavish habits were hard to shake off, and an old man's tales of bygone splendour fell on less and less credulous ears.

If his son inherited an adventurous bent, his journeys of discovery were more of the mind, and it was not until long after he had grown up that he roamed far from home. It may have been a good thing for him that he did not go to Europe to study, as a young man of wealthier family would have done. Too many Indians of that day came back from the West full of enthusiasms that failed to survive transplantation, or that they could not spread to others. Faiz Ahmed imbibed the ideas of the nineteen-

thirties, more gradually but tenaciously, from books or smuggled pamphlets, travellers' tales, and that impalpable genie known as the Spirit of the Age. They rooted themselves in his own soil, he saw them and their shadows by familiar sunlight; they took possession of his imagination, a strong hold from which ideas are less easily dislodged, as well as of his mind.

He studied chiefly philosophy and English literature, at Lahore, the provincial capital and centre of the network of affiliated colleges making up the University of the Panjab, where a number of gifted young men came by education in the fullest sense of the word. In due course he gained a junior lecturing post in a college at Amritsar, where I first had the good fortune to get to know him, thirty years ago. It was a Muslim college in the city sacred to the Sikhs, where the communal passions already fermenting were strong. But there was no hostile frontier then as now between Amritsar and Lahore, and the Panjab was still in many ways a Sleepy Hollow where life moved at the pace of the feeble cab-horses drawing their two-wheeled *tongas* where young men could indulge in old carefree idle ways, with long hours of debate in coffee-houses and moonlight picnics by the river Ravi. In this mode of living, verse-making played a part it has long since lost in the busy practical West. It was a polite accomplishment, a hobby cultivated by men, and a few women, in varied walks of life; often, to be sure, a racking of brains over elusive rhymes not much more elevating than a Londoner's crossword-puzzle. The *mushaira* or public recitation by a set of poets in turn, the novice first, the most admired writer last, was a popular social gathering, as it still remains; an audience would often guess a rhyme-word or phrase before it came, and join in like a chorus. Radio, then getting under way, was lending it

a new medium, broadening into an entertainment for a whole province what had begun long ago as the recreation of a small Court circle. It might be highly artificial, as when participants were supplied beforehand with a rhyme to manipulate; and a scribbler well endowed with Voice could make the most hackneyed. Phrase or threadbare sentiment sound portentous by delivering them in the half-singing or chanting (tarannum) fashion, or the declamatory style of recitation, that many affected. Still, the institution has helped to keep poetry before the public, and, along with floods of commonplace, to make known an occasional new talent.

Faiz Ahmed rhymed with the rest, and unlike some innovators complied with usage by adopting a pen-name or *takhallus* that of Faiz, meaning 'bounty' or 'liberality:[1] looking back one may be tempted to read into it a meaning not yet in his mind, dedication to the service of his fellow-men. He emerged quickly from among the poetasters of whom every year engendered a fresh swarm, though not by dint of cultivating an aesthetic deportment, as some did. To outward appearance he was a good-natured, easy-going fellow, fond of cricket and dawdling, those favourite pastimes of Lahore, and readier to let others talk than to talk himself. It was characteristic of him that when reciting his verses, whether among a few friends or in a crowded college gathering, he spoke them quietly and unexcitedly.

Their quality was naturally mixed. The fine quatrain that stands at the beginning of his first book of verse published in 1941 (no one in this anthology) was not the first to be written. He began with exercises, conventional enough, on well-worn topics, sighing over the cruelty of a non-existent mistress or extolling the charms of the grape. These also were invested with some fanciful attributes, for beer and whisky, not wine, were the liquors that the British

presence had familiarized in India, and for literary purposes a beverage had to be poured not from bottle into glass but from flask into goblet. (*Shisha*, a classical word, has come to be used for 'tumbler', but there is no term for 'bottle' except the impossible English word, spoken with a long 'o' and rhyming with Indian pronunciation of 'hotel')

But if Lahore was still on the surface an uneventful place, the tides of history were washing to and fro in India and the world outside, and their ripples reaching the Mall Road and the Kashmiri Gate. Independence was only a decade away, and Faiz's lines were soon being coloured by patriotic feeling: almost as soon, by socialist feeling, for socialism was the new revelation that young idealists could invoke to exorcise communal rancours, by uniting the majority from all communities in a struggle against their common poverty, and to make independence a blessing to the poor as well as to the elite. History was to take a different turning; older forces and allegiances were to prove stronger, for a long time to come at least. But for young poets and story-writers national and social emancipation seemed to go together, and both to go with their own newfound freedom to try new subjects and methods. They were reading, and sometimes imitating (Faiz seldom if ever did this directly) Western writers like T. S. Eliot and Auden and Day Lewis. Their Progressive Writers' Association was a force in the land, and the Punjab had its own branch. Besides taking part in this Faiz, with the realistic sense he has always had that the poet is also a citizen, was getting in touch with groups of workingmen, and would spend evenings teaching them reading and writing the ABC of politics.

Indian marriages were not made in heaven, but arranged, as they still often are, by careful parents, particularly in respectable Muslim families, whose women

went out heavily veiled from head to foot. Faiz was once comically indignant at being invited to speak on Shakespeare in a girls' college, and made to address an unseen audience from the other side of a screen. In such an environment there was a double blessing for him in his marriage with an Englishwoman of remarkable character (whom I have the good fortune to have known even longer than I have known him); she has been ever since his best friend and guardian angel, and, with two daughters he is devoted to, has brought into his life a security that nothing else could have given it.

Before 1939 he had made a name for himself in literature; the war and its aftermath made room for him in political history too. This is not the place for a detailed review of his political or civic activities, but it is proper to emphasize that the ideals inspiring them have had a vital part in his literary development as well. They involved him in dilemmas inescapable in an India verging on revolution or civil war, and then in a raw new Pakistan painfully collecting itself into a nation. No straight road through this chaos was to be found, and every individual had to make decisions of his own. In all that parts of the world movements and loyalties have been apt, like its nvers, to, mine and go suddenly, one day in full spate, the next dried up. Faiz has remained all this time faithful to what might be called an enlightened, humanistic socialism; the kind of activity open to him has fluctuated with circumstances.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Faiz like many Indians saw the war in a new light, as a contest in which the destinies of mankind were at stake, and with the approval of his associates joined the welfare department of the army; he was to be met with now on the Mall in the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel, solemnly returning salutes from British soldiers. After independence

came in 1947, accompanied by partition, he continued to hope, as he has always done, for good relations between the two countries. When Gandhi was murdered by a Hindu fanatic, for trying to protect the Muslim minority in India, Faiz was, as a London newspaper said, 'a brave enough man to fly from Lahore for Gandhi's funeral at the height of Indo-Pakistan hatred'. This hatred had been inflamed by the massacres, most terrible in the Panjab that raged during the process of partition. To Faiz these horrors could only be expunged by the building of his new nation on principles of social justice and progress. One of his best-known poems (No.19, Freedom's Dawn, August 1947) expressed the tragic disillusionment of finding the promised land a Canaan or so it seemed to him only flowing with milk and honey for feudal landowners and self-seeking politicians.

With the removal by death of Pakistan's first and most trusted leaders, and reform and development sluggish, this disillusion soon became widespread. Editor now of the *Pakistan Times* of Lahore, Faiz made use of prose as well as verse to denounce obstruction at home and to champion progressive causes abroad; he made his paper one whose opinions were known and quoted far and wide, with respect if not everywhere with approval. He served as vice-president of the Trade Union Congress, and secretary of the Pakistan Peace Committee. This period ended abruptly with his arrest, along with a number of other figures, civil and military, in March 1951. The Rawalpindi Conspiracy trial unfolded its slow and somewhat mysterious length, during which a death-sentence was a lingering possibility, down to 1953, when Faiz was condemned to four years' imprisonment.

His health suffered, but he was able to read, and think his own thoughts, and collect materials for a long-promised (but still, alas, unperformed) history of Urdu

literature. To him as a poet his prison term might be called a well-disguised blessing. His wartime work had been heavy; he lamented that as soon as a new couplet began to stir in his mind he had to get up and go back to his office. After the war his editorial desk was even more enslaving. He might indeed point to the files of his newspaper, as Lamb did to the ledgers of the East India Company, as his real works. Worst of all has been a social environment prodigally wasteful, everywhere south of the Himalayas, of the time of men whose time is of any value. Far more than in the West a writer's admirers show their appreciation of him by thronging about him and making it impossible for him to write, or to keep to any rational plan of work; custom imposes on all alike the same monstrous proportion of talking to thinking as that of sack to bread in Falstaff's tavern bills. Even Faiz's wife has only been able to rescue him by half or quarter from this asphyxiation. Prison enabled him to write what for him was a considerable number of poems, in which his ideals took on fresh strength by being alloyed with harsh experience, and which were eagerly devoured by the public, in spite of the charges weighing over him.

Released in 1955, Faiz took up journalism again, but this quickly brought another, briefer spell in jail, one incident in a prevailing confusion that political affairs were falling into, and that led to the assumption of power by the army.' This did away with political confusion for the next decade, but also with nearly all political life, and it drastically curtailed the freedom of the press. Faiz's health moreover was no longer good, and a habit of perpetual cigarette-smoking, with a marked prejudice against physical exercise in any form, has not in these latter years improved it. He had to look for other kinds of work, cultural rather than political and in a way more congenial.

He helped to make a film, which won international awards, about the lives of the fisherfolk, whom he visited and greatly liked, among the rivers of East Pakistan. He had plans for a national theatre, and with his wife sponsored a variety of local dramatic experiments. Drama is an art that found no entry into Islamic countries through the ages, and that Faiz believed might have a serious function in a new nation like Pakistan. In other elements of culture Indian Islam was rich, and it was his design to bring to light all that was capable of healthy growth among them, to help to form them into a modern national culture. He went back to his first vocation, teaching, and undertook the reorganization of a Karachi college founded by charitable endowment for poor students. When politics began to throw off, early in tybo, a long immobility, is a concern for the country's future showed itself as keen as ever. On March 1st he made a long statement, full of practical good sense, to a round-table conference of progressive groups at Rawalpindi.

He has been living of late years at Karachi, that odd medley of Victorian facades and modern industry and spreading suburban villas with a hankering fur the picturesque dilapidation of the, city of Lahore, and even, in sentimental moments, for his paternal village, where it may be conjectured that he would quickly die of boredom. In these years he has travelled the world a good deal, as his literary fame spread; it was of course in socialist countries that he came to be known first. He has been in China and Sinkiang, and several times in the USSR, where a translation of all his poems in Russian' verse was published in 1960; the Muslim areas of Soviet Asia had a special attraction for him, and he for them. He has been in the USA, and Cuba, and in England, though regrettably seldom, considering his English wife and friends and

literary connections. Once he was tempted as far north as Edinburgh, where he found that he had miscalculated the temperature of a Scottish winter. Most remarkably, he has made frequent short visits to India. Urdu poetry has been one of the slender bridges left standing between the divided countnes, and Faiz's poems are welcomed on both sides of the border. Some of his best poems have been in honour of peace.

Amid these gropings and wanderings Faiz has continued to write the short poems that made him famous. He has written, altogether, too little; a small collection of poems now and then, with gaps of years in between, and a number of essays, collected in 1964 into a vclume of literary criticism. Not seldom his talent has been thought to be drying up, though it has always flowed again; not seldom he himself talks of giving up composition, which with him is not facile improvisation but demands long, arduous effort. It may be a related fact that any sort of communication with other minds has become for him, as he once said to me, more and more difficult. Through verse, when he is successful with it, he overcomes this difficulty, at a more modest level an evening's conviviality may transform him from a rather tongue-tied companion (a day with whom once reminded an intelligent young woman, a family friend of ours', of the silences of Colonel Bramble) into a ready and entertaining talker, with a lively sense of humour that finds little or no outlet in his verses.

What he has written, however much less than what he might, has brought him to something like the position of an unofficial poet laureate in West Pakistan, a land where poetry still makes an appeal potent enough to disarm some political and even religious prejudice. Criticism, even abuse, for his, opinion, have never ceased to come his way, and there are traces of this to be discerned in some of his

poems. To be a nationalist writer is easy, to be a national writer hard. As a poet whom his countrymen are proud of, and at the same time a target of frequent attacks, Faiz's situation has been a contradictory one, reflecting the contradictory moods of a nation lqbal said, 'of all the East in search of its soul'.

Some of Faiz's poetry is simple and direct, but often it is couched in a literary idiom some knowledge of which is needed for its appreciation, and one more artificial or artful than most. Urdu itself as a language might be called a bundle of anomalies, beginning with the fact that this language of many virtues has no true homeland. It originated, from the early stages of the 'Muslim', or rather Central-Asian, conquest of India, as the lingua franca of the 'camp' (its name derives from the same Turki root as the English word horde). It was a mixture of the Arabicized Persian used by the invaders, themselves a miscellany of Turks and others, with some of the still unformed Hindi dialects of the upper Gangetic valley, or 'Hindustan'. In verb structure it was native Indian, a fact which entitles it to be classed as an Indian language; in vocabulary largely foreign, much as a simplified Anglo-Saxon base was overlaid after the Norman conquest with French or low-Latin words. Urdu and English both began, therefore, about the same time, as pidgin dialects, or hybrids, and gradually evolved into self-sufficient languages, with special qualities derived from their mixed antecedents, qualities of contrast and modulation of great significance for poetry. Some of Shakespeare's effects could only have been achieved in such a medium, and Urdu can combine the harmony of Persian with the energy of Arabic and the simplicity of rustic Hindi.

During its centuries of growth, Persian served as the administrative and literary language of the Muslim ruling

circles, Sanskrit continued to be the learned language of Hindus. But Indian vernaculars, including Hindi, hitherto a group of dialects rather than a language, were also taking shape; and when with the crumbling of Muslim political ascendancy in the 18th century Urdu emerged as successor to Persian, it was bound to have to compete, sooner or later, with some of these others, Hindi in particular. Its original function as a lingua franca now belonged to the colloquial mixture often called 'Hindustani', on the level at which modern Urdu and Hindi are virtually identical. Muslims and Hindus had lived side by side for ages (and most Muslims were descendants of Hindu converts), and in humdrum practical matters understood one another well enough for more complex ideas which neither had in fact been cultivating. With much freshness for a long time they had acquired little of a shared vocabulary. Hence when modern conditions brought the necessity of thinking on new lines, an elite culture suffused on each side with religious influences drew them in opposite directions. Learned Urdu has a diction heavily Persian and Arabic, learned Hindi heavily Sanskritic, and their scripts, the Persianized form of Arabic on the one hand, the Nagari or Sanskrit on the other, complete their mutual unintelligibility. It would be like this in English if half its users formed their technical and philosophical terms from Hebrew instead of Greek, and used Hebrew letters instead of Roman. Thus Urdu, originally a channel between older and newer inhabitants of India, in the past century has come to be one of the stumbling-blocks to fellow-feeling.

Urdu had grown not where there were most Muslims, in modern West and East Pakistan, but where Muslim political and cultural ascendency was firmest, which was always in and round the capital cities Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Hyderabad. Muslim civilization everywhere

in history has been an urban civilization. This means that today Urdu as a mother-tongue finds itself marooned in the heart of Hindu India, chiefly in the U.P., the old Hindustan, where some nationalists are disposed to question its title to exist, and some of its lovers not all of them Muslims regretfully feel it to be doomed to a slow decline; though on the other hand some new opportunities have come its way, notably in the cinema. In Pakistan it is being brought forward as a national language, as Hindi is in India. But East Pakistan has proved faithful to the Bengali that it shares with West Bengal in India. In the western Panjab, nucleus of West Pakistan, Urdu is the vehicle of literature, of the newspaper press, and of formal or ceremonial speech; it is employed for everyday purposes of writing, and is challenging English as the medium of higher education. But all familiar converse is carried on in Panjabi, a vernacular shared like Bengali with a province of India; a language, or as some would say a group of dialects, standing to Urdu in something like the relationship of the broadest of rural Scots to the most refined of Oxford English.

When the Mogul empire faded, and with it the old cultural links with Persia, it was chiefly the poetical part of the legacy of Persian that Urdu fell heir to. For public business, legal or administrative, and higher education, English was the successor. The Muslim community, socially an unbalanced one of feudal cast, with only an embryonic middle class, had few professional or commercial men with reason to write prose; and fallen from power, unable for long to adapt itself to new times, it had stronger feelings than thoughts, an impulsion towards emotional verse more than towards rational prose. In Ghalib the language found the poet still regarded as its greatest. He belonged, until the Mutiny swept it away, to the shadowy Mogul court at

Delhi, with its poignant contrast between present and past to kindle his imagination. Urdu prose on the contrary was virtually making its first start with Sir Sayyed Ahmad,' who likewise began in Delhi but shook its ancient dust on his feet and entered English service before the Mutiny; his mental life was one of wrestling with the problem, for Muslim India, of its present and its future. Subsequent progress has been uneven, and since the birth of Pakistan it has been a disputed issue there whether, or how rapidly, Urdu can be made the medium of higher education, scientific included.' Faiz is one of those most firmly convinced that it is capable of meeting every modern requirement.

As a poetical medium, Urdu might almost be a language made up by poets for their own benefit; a one-sided benefit no doubt by comparison with Western languages like English whose foremost poets, from Shakespeare down, have so often been first-rate prose writers as well. But this double faculty may be a thing of the past. Modern English may be too far secularized, overloaded with utilitarian burdens, to be capable any longer of poetry. A language like Urdu, with smaller prose content, has so to speak a lower boiling-point, and boils up into poetry or vaporizes into verse more readily. As one consequence of this freedom from dull workaday business, Urdu may have gone on being tied more closely than need be to the apron-strings of classical Persian. This continued to be studied and read after its fall from power in India, and in West Pakistan still is so quite widely. Almost any Persian noun or adjective might be brought into an Urdu verse, just as any Greek word can nowadays be incorporated into English prose. Persian syntax too, notably the use of the izafat (-e-) to join a noun either with its adjective or with its possessive, is retained to a much

greater extent than in prose. Until a generation ago a whole Persian line or couplet might be inserted in an Urdu poem.

Between Mutiny and Great War two shifts, not unrelated, were taking place in Urdu poetry. It was coming to be less a lament for a lost past, and more an expression of the sensations of a Muslim community struggling to find its place in a changed world. Secondly, its main inspiration was migrating, with the coming of Iqbal, from the old centres, Delhi and Lucknow, northward to the Panjab; from early in this century to the partition, the two regions disputed the palm warmly between themselves, the older one priding itself at least on higher polish and technical proficiency some analogy may be drawn between them and their counterparts in Ireland. In Hindustan the leading Muslims were gentry of old family, descendants of Conquers from abroad, but becoming in course of time more Indian than the solid mass of Muslims in the north-west; as the Anglo-irish gentry in southern Ireland were in most ways except Religion more Ireland than the solid mass of Protestant settlers in Urster Irelands literary, renaissance early in this century, Anglo Irish southern Protestants played a large part. Urdu poets in Hindustan, had been playing some such part. The shift northward to the Panjab (which scarcely had a parallel in Ireland) meant in the long run a turning away from India, and presaged the birth of Pakistan or so we may see it in retrospect decades before anyone dreamed of such a thing.

On the surface the Panjab might have seemed too dull and torpid to be a nesting-place for poetry. There were only two big towns, and hardly any modern industry, big landlords loyal to the British power, the creator of many of them, held a preponderant influence. Geography has in some epochs isolated the land of the Five Rivers, at other times tilled it with vibrations from, round about, according

to the condition in which neighbouring regions have been. When these have flourished, it has been a meeting-ground of ideas, as of trade-routes, instead of a backwater. It merges south-westward into the Indus valley, south-eastward into the Gangetic; north-east it has had historic links with Kashmir, north-west still closer ones with the frontier, Afghanistan, the roads into Persia and middle Asia. Hardly any other corner of Asia occupies such a focal position. Seldom since early Indo-Aryan times an intellectual leader, it has repeatedly been plunged by forces within and pressures from without into emotional and social turmoil. The coming of Islam, which in the end was to split the province in two, affected all of it in some degree, and helped to generate the ferment out of which came Sikhism, the one new religion that India with all its religiousness has given birth to since Buddhism. But this turned into a military domination, without much cultural vitality of its own in the 19th century Persia and central Asia, the old neighbours to the north, seemed to be at long last expiring, while British rule concentrated Indian energies in the seaboard provinces and treated the Panjab mainly as a recruiting-ground for the army.

By the end of the century, however, Persia, rousing itself again, and Islam in Asia stirring in its sleep, while from southward the European ideas that had long been at home in Bombay and Calcutta were now filtering into the Panjab. As in other ages, these new currents were to make for bigger upheavals here than elsewhere, among a folk even in their physical proportions larger than life compared with most other Indians. Inevitably old communal jealousies would revive alongside of new things. Altogether it was a land riddled to an exceptional degree with contradictions old and new; one of sturdy peasants as well as landlords, one steeped in rustic humour and realism as

well as possessing in Lahore a city which did not forget that it was once the Mogul imperial capital; a province that others seemed to have left far behind, but with lurking energies and untested capabilities waiting to break out, for good or evil, when the sleeping giant should awaken. It might even be said that Urdu poetry was taking wing to the Panjab because here it found most contraries and complexities to stimulate it. All three communities were writing Urdu verse, and in the same idiom; Muslims were easily in the lead, and have provided all the important names. Less at home in the new age than their Hindu neighbours they struck the visitor as having, by and large, less practical capacity, with far more imagination.

Tagore could address his Bengali compatriots in their own language, which besides a very long poetic tradition had also during the 19th century acquired a modern prose. Panjabi was rich in little but folk-poetry, and the chief other purpose it had served was as a vehicle for part of the Sikh scriptures, which invested it as a written language with associations distasteful to Muslims. They relegated it to colloquial purposes for which Urdu was too high-flown somewhat as Beatrice told Don Pedro he was too fine a husband for her, she would need another for weekdays. For Urdu this was bound to involve a certain removal from actuality, such as Burns's verse underwent when he wrote in English instead of Scots. It brought the countervailing gift of an exotic, romantic vocabulary like a southern breeze laden with tropical scents. Words from far away make a more sensuously thrilling impression on the ear than familiar homespun ones, and through the ear on the fancy. Muslim habits of hearing or reciting Koranic passages in half-understood Arabic must have worked in the same manner. It may be guessed that the Urdu poet does not always have before his mind's eye so lively an

image of the things he is speaking of as a European would, his mind is astir with words which are for him sounds, evocations, ancestral memories, less closely tied to tangible objects; of the 'two worlds' he so often sets against each other it is the invisible rather than the visible in which he is roaming.

All this harmonized with the situation of the Muslim class literate enough to have a full command of Urdu though its poetical appeal could be felt more widely. It was a narrow middle class oriented by circumstances more towards fantasy than towards reality, overshadowed economically by Hindu competitors with far more capital, and also far more willingness to scorn delights and live laborious days as the pursuit of money. It was chronically pulled opposite ways: It wanted to grow, learn, move with the times or, impatiently, leave them behind; both from difference about its ability to compete, and an inborn distaste for competitive moneygrabbing, it was often apt to shrink into its shell, to retreat along the old caravan trail winding away into the heart of Asia and its luxurious dream-world of shining dome and legend and remote superb names. Ultimately the outcome of these contrary impulses, irreconcilable within Indian horizons, would be the demand for a separate State. In the meantime Urdu and Urdu poetry were, next to religion, the Muslims' lifeline, giving them a sense of identity, a collective vision.

So much of the spirit and tone of Urdu poetry derives from Persian tradition that this ancestry must often be kept in mind, even when a poet like Faiz is alluding to quite contemporary matters. Verse forms and metres, besides diction, have helped to preserve continuity; and, still more strikingly, a common stock of imagery, which can be varied and recomposed inexhaustibly in much the same way that Indian (and Pakistani) classical music is founded

on a set of standard note-combinations (*ragas*) on which the performer improvises variations. All this was part of a culture that, like Europe's later, came into India fully-fledged, acquiring there a fresh colouring, new accompaniments such as the *mushaira*, yet never becoming altogether Indian.

Persian poetic attitudes were social. Whereas the Chinese poet so often purports to be wandering lonely as a cloud over his mountain, the Persian is to be found reciting in a 'circle', or 'gathering', or 'assembly', or breaking away from it only in a fit of literary frenzy. Behind this fiction lay the reception-room or hall of royal court or feudal mansion, where men of letters competed for the patron's favour and rewards; a rivalry of which today's *mushaira* is an imitation. Its setting was nocturnal, lamplit; a reader may call up in his mind the scene that Faiz evokes in a line of poem (No.23, Lyre and Flute) a Mogul chamber with walls honeycombed into small niches, each holding its lighted candle. By time honoured custom another candle or lamp was placed before each poet in turn as he recited. When we are transported out of doors it is to a garden, the formal garden or rather park with its water channels running in straight lines from pool to fountain between flowerbeds and avenues, still to be seen in its perfection at Lahore in the Shalimar garden and the precincts of Jahangir's mausoleum, or at Agra in those of the Taj Mahal: an exquisite oasis in a thirsty land, a paradise shut off from the sorry scheme of things outside by a rectangle of high wall. Here is the Islamic urban civilization refined to the last degree, a haven within a haven. On the scorched plains of upper India, as in inner Asia, Nature itself is man-made, the marble cascade replaces the waterfall, and all the vulgar reality of yokel, spade, and manure heap is forgotten. Readers brought up on English poetry have found it easy to

enter into the spirit of Chinese poetry, simple and naturalistic, haunted by the sound of rock perched trees and winds; no poet from the Islamic realm has captivated them so much, except Omar Khayyam, self-banished into the wilderness that came up as close to the gates of the old cities of middle Asia as night in those latitudes succeeds day.

Fail observed, when asked about this absence of free Nature, that the poets of former days were courtiers, feudal retainers of uncertain rank, whose duty was to be at hand whenever their patron wanted to be refreshed with wit or fancy, not to disport themselves in the countryside. He himself has a love of gardens, fostered by early acquaintance with the classic shades of Lahore, and with a later, less formal park there, the Lawrence (now Jinnah) Bagh, one of his youthful haunts, for which he has pined during his sojourn in Karachi.' He is no gardener, but in jail did make an attempt at growing flowers from packets of seed requisitioned from distant Scotland, while a fellow-prisoner of more mundane tastes devoted his garden plot to rearing chickens.

Feudal patronage was capricious, and the rhymer often, likes Shakespeare, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes. It went with this, and with things deeper in the fibre of Indo-Muslim society, that though habitually addressing a company, he did so as an individual alone in the group: he assumed frequently a tone of repining, lamenting a hard lot in a bad world, the demeanour of a martyr, despised and rejected by men and mistress. This posture too has descended on much Urdu poetry of our time, producing on occasion a disparity almost ludicrous between a writer's heartbroken accents and his jolly countenance off duty. But the poet composing under the eye of an autocratic patron and of an inflexible religion

could not give vent to his gloomier feelings in any open manner, or seem to be finding fault with the order of things as by God and the Sultan established. True, in the fiction of these symposia the patron was not supposed to be present in his own person: art requires some, if only fictitious, equality among its devotees, and the patron might be a poetaster himself, and take his turn to recite his own productions under his own pen-name. The last Mogul emperor, who had few cares of State to oppress him, was no mean performer. It was, then, the *Saqi* who was supposed to preside, and be the centre of attraction: the wine-pourer, elevated into a mysteriously fascinating woman with whom all present were supposed to be hopelessly in love an idealized, earthed version of the educated courtesan whose reception room was the nearest that Muslim India could come to a European salon. It was under colour of bewailing the hard heartedness of this demigoddess that the poet could most easily give voice to his grievances against life at large. A true poet would be expressing something deeper than his own private disappointments. Ghalib we may think of as lamenting, in effect, the passing of an empire and a civilization, and generations of Muslim readers must have felt their own nostalgia echoed in his lines.

The oblique allusion, the conventional symbol, could be understood by each hearer in his own fashion, and applied to his own condition; for in that society all, from highest to lowest, were haunted by the same sense of mutability and insecurity, of the need for a protector. Hence evolved a kind of 'metaphysical' style, an elaborate play of fancy and ingenuity; once established, within a pattern of society only very sluggishly changing, this could keep a remarkably tenacious hold. It has kept it even in our changing times: abstracted and generalized in this manner,

the perplexities and distresses of man's social being have from age to age a common complexion.

Love might stand for defiance, self-assertion, as well as resigned self pity. It has played this part in many times and places, under a multitude of guises, always somewhere between life and art; where women went veiled it was bound to stand closer to art and fancy. The poet's world is an imaginary city, like that of Faiz's poem (No.47, The Hail of Stones) Islam had no nations, any more than it had, culturally speaking, and villages: as in old Italy a man's native town was his patna. In this city there is always a *Ku-e-malamat*, or 'Street of Reproach': again a poetical depiction of the entertainers' quarter where courtesans and ordinary prostitutes and dancing-girls lived. Here a reckless lover will be carrying on a clandestine affair, heedless of the frowns of dull elders or precisians, the *rumores serum severiorsum*. Or he may rush out from the town into the wilderness, and roam to and fro endeavouring to cool his distemper in its blank emptiness.'

All this lover's fever might represent, or the hearer was free to think of it as representing, the spiritual seeker's thirst for divine truth; and in this signification in turn, literal melted into metaphorical, and God himself might be either reality or symbol. In a society saturated with religious forms and phrases (though, like aristocratic Europe, seldom religious in its conduct) poetic imagery was bound to flow very often into their mould. In Islamic orthodoxy, there was small room for anything artistic, except the sublime simplicity of its best architecture. But side by side with it was the mystical cult of the Sufis, who sought through prayer and spiritual exercises, sometimes music and dance eschewed by the orthodox, even by means of drugs, to soar from the dull earth into contact with, or absorption into, the divine essence.' This cult came from

Persia, but helped to make Islam in India more Indian, by its affinity with the bhakti stream in Hinduism. In the Panjab more than elsewhere the two escaped from the cloister and joined and fermented among common people, helping to create a body of folk poetry where the religious brotherhood of man blended with thoughts of social equality, deliverance from feudal bonds. 'Much of the mood and phraseology of Sufism, its catalogue of the 'states and stages' (hal-o-maqam) of the pilgrim soul, its vital relationship between the spiritual guide and his disciples, was taken over into poetry, and had a further existence there as part of the counterpoint of mask and symbol. When a poet did not picture himself seated in a court circle, it would often be the circle of disciples round their master that he conjured up. Nor were the two so far apart as might seem; mystics had often clothed their thoughts in verse, courtiers and even rulers might also be disciples; a divine Beloved could melt imperceptibly into an earthly one, an ideal feminine, an unattainable mistress who was also the wine pourer at the never ending feast, as uncertain, coy, and hard to please as Fortune, dispenser of life's never ending deceptions.

Love and religion shared besides a common emblem in wine, another refinement of gross fact into ideal essence. If in the feudal courts liquor forbidden to the faithful ran freely, and a Ghalib might be a serious drinker, poetically wine stood for exaltation, inspiration, and the tavern was the abode of truly heart felt spiritual experience as opposed to the formal creed of the mosque. Drunkenness and madness are near allied, and the later *junun*, 'rapture' in the literal sense of possession by a spirit (*jinn*) retained some of the aura that surrounds it among primitive people; it might be either the passion of the worshipper of beauty

throwing the world away for love or the ecstasy of the acolyte despising material success in his heavenly quest.

All this vogue of 'madness' was a recoil from the hard fixity of life, the rigid framework within which man as a social animal imprisons himself, the sordid egotism forced on men who, whether poets or politicians, could only rise at one another's expense. It gave relief to the vague craving that every society generates, if only in it's younger or more idealistic members, for something better, higher, freer. Against the omnipotence of Church and State there could be no rebellion; but veiled protest was allowable, under the form of praise of the individual prepared to defy convention, which as a harmless safety-valve became itself a tolerated part of the convention. Wine, love, mystic flights were all momentary refuges from the bondage of reality. They fostered some poetry, as well as much literary posturing and affectation; the time would come when a poet like Faiz, standing at a new point in history, would be able to give them a fresh meaning, as symbols of a revolutionary challenge to the social order instead of a merely token defiance of it or a withdrawal from it into fantasy.

Ambiguity belonged to the essence of this style; in its visionary landscape things melted into one another like dreams, and everything had a diversity of meanings, or rather, any precisely definable 'meaning' was lost in a diffused glow. A poet might really have mystic moods, or might really be in love with a woman, or, as in Greece or Rome, with a man; but for his poetry, for his hearers, that was not the real point, any more than for us when we listen to a piece of music whose composer may have felt religious, or been in love.' The most characteristic verse form was the *ghazal*, a string of any number of couplets in any one metre, rhyming AA BA CA DA.... These should not aim at

any obvious logical sequence, but owe their coherence to the recurrent rhyme and to a stream of association eddying beneath the surface. Its standard topic is love, its tone one of graceful trifling, and in ordinary hands it is not much more than a metrical exercise; so much so that in modern Urdu it constitutes a poetic hemisphere by itself, and a writer may be classed either as a serious poet or, with a touch of disparagement, as a *ghazal*-writer. The form has nevertheless been used by the foremost poets for the weightiest purposes; and it too has helped to provide a rainbow bridge between the impressionism of the past and the realism of the present.

One who notably turned the *ghazal* to new purposes was Mohamed Iqbal (1873-1938), the greatest Urdu poet to arise since Ghalib. Born like Faiz at Sialkot, close to the mountains and close to the religious and cultural frontier that now divides India from Pakistan, he was a Panjabi of the professional middle class who wrote English prose and Urdu and Persian verse; a Panjabi, that is, whose mental horizons were far more expansive than those of his own province, and who as a result in some ways soared above its realities, in other ways fell short of them. In Urdu he wrote chiefly short poems, lyrical, religious, or satirical; in classical Persian long didactic poems addressed to the whole of Muslim Asia. He went through an early phase of addiction to English models, including description of Nature, and at the same time of attachment to the ideal, of equally Western source, of a free Indian nation with Hindu and Muslim as fellow citizens. He studied in England and Germany, and was impressed especially by Nietzsche. Later his antipathy to Western imperialism in India and Asia deepened, but there came also disenchantment with the Indian national movement. He found an alternative in the vision, conjured up out of the hopes and doubts of his

community, the Muslim middle class of the Panjab, of a grand Islamic revival and renewal, in which all the Muslim peoples should arise from their slumber, at once firm in their ancient faith and strong in modern knowledge. The glorious daybreak he was looking forward to, did not dawn. Most of the Muslim peoples were not yet finding their way either back to a renewed faith or forward to a modern organization. Even to him it grew clear that Pan-Islamic hopes would not be realized soon, and he turned his attention more to the predicament of his own community, and came to be identified with the programme of a separate Muslim state. He is therefore, though he died a decade before the partition, venerated often uncritically, as in all such cases as the moral founder of Pakistan.

Religious enthusiasm led lqbal regrettably far towards seeing everything as an antithesis between Eastern faith and Western reason, identified with Western materialism and imperialism. Nietzsche too encouraged him to uphold the instinctive against the rational, feeling against thought. It was an antithesis that reflected the historical contradiction of his whole position, the inspiration of Faiz's life has been the hope of overcoming it with the aid of a new synthesis, that of socialism, seen as the reconciler of old culture and modern science in a refashioned society. He too doubtless has found history caught in unexpected crosscurrents, and not always moving as he hoped to see it. And despite the vast distance separating the two men, the prophet and the humanist, Faiz stands recognizably in the same line of succession. lqbal left no true inheritor either of his philosophy or of his manner. But Faiz, who appeared on the literary scene just when Iqbal was departing from it, is not only the most gifted poetically of those who have come after: he has had all his life the same fundamental sense that poetry ought to

be the servant of a cause, a beacon to 'poor humanity's afflicted will', not a mere display of ornamental skill.

Between the two a curious medley of contrasts and resemblances can be rioted. In point of diction they are not very far apart, though Faiz has written verse only in Urdu, being no more drawn to Persian as a medium than, at the other extreme, to Panjabi. At certain moments he has achieved a striking simplification of expression (No.11, Speak a landmark of its period); more often his pen is dipped as deep as Iqbal in Persian and Arabic. Even while he, along with most of the Muslim progressive writers of his generation, adhered as lqbal had done in youth to the ideal of a united India, he was repelled by the prospect held up by Gandhi of a united 'Hindustani' language, a nondescript neither Hindi nor Urdu. There were many different roads by which a Muslim might travel to Pakistan All the same, a fondness for allusion to things Hindu, even religious, has not left him; and it is worth while to observe that whereas Iqbal's great model and master was Rumi, the Persian mystical poet of mediaeval Asia Minor, Faiz has looked up above all to Ghalib, the arch-poet of modern Muslim India.

In the colouring of their work there is the strongest contrast between lqbal and Faiz. At his most natural lqbal is ardent, impetuous, and direct; Faiz more delicately suggestive, and even less easily translated. One paints a picture that seems bathed in sunlight, the other in moonlight. Iqbal's daylight, on the other hand, owes little to our diurnal sun. As Faiz once pointed out in a lecture in London, lqbal employs surprisingly little imagery of his own, and shows only the scantiest awareness of the physical world about him, no recognition of Nature except in some early poems. To the Western reader, brought up on naturalism, Faiz's own external world may appear stylized

enough, like the landscape of a Persian miniature. But his imagery has grown increasingly free and profuse, until some of his later poems almost seem to dissolve in it.

Of his human environment each was keenly aware, each in his own way a 'committed' poet. Both combined older modes, elegiac, romantic, introspective, with a fresh note of criticism of society, and desire to alter it. Because they were animated by faith in something fresh and great, some cause above themselves for which to enlist public support, both were able to make use of the symbols their readers knew by heart, but to lend them fresh significance. Some contemporaries of Faiz, more negative and individualistic in outlook, were inclined to abandon them, in favour of a more direct and 'modern' handling of their subjects. For the poet appealing to collective emotions the symbols could still prove their value, clothing in familiar garb ideas too new and raw to be transformed immediately into poetry; though both Iqbal and Faiz might resort to them more sparingly as time went on quality may be felt a certain faltering at the close, when he seems to try to resolve his discords without quite finding the right key.

He has been saved from becoming merely, or too facilely, a political writer, like so many others, or as Iqbal was too frequently preacher more than poet, by a strong inner resistance, a matter of both temperament and conviction. All imaginative writers are conscious of divided minds, opposing intuitions, and Faiz more than most. Readers have noticed how often in his earlier and middle work his poems turn like (No.12, Poetry's Theme or No.23, Lyre and Flute) originally entitled Two Voices' on a kind of duality, as if he were struggling to reconcile two contradictory visions of life. He is himself an odd mixture, an Oriental mixture, one is tempted to say, of indolence and energy, an inclination to contemplate existence

through a cloud of cigarette-smoke and a compulsion to act. To get him to answer a missive is as nearly vain as any human endeavour can be; the 'violent hatred of letter-writing' that Coleridge found in Wordsworth is at least as strong in Faiz. Yet the spirit of the age has drawn him along a path necessarily toilsome, at times perilous.

Artists everywhere in our age, and the age itself in a vaster, more chaotic way, have faced conflicting claims of old and new, present and future, each right in its way; of Utopia and possibility, emotion and reason, worker and intellectual, individual and society. Perhaps by now we have seen enough to conclude that the artist's true function is not to identify himself too closely with one demand or the other, but to mediate or hold the balance between them. And perhaps it is in this direction that instinct and experience have guided Faiz. Some of his fellow-writers, in India and Pakistan as elsewhere, have withdrawn into ivory towers, some have made themselves mouthpieces of political leaders, and some have stopped writing. Faiz's inner divisions, painful as they may have been, were a symptom rather of health than of weakness, of civic spirit combined with an artistic sense too strong to let him be swamped by the tidal force of a movement. Like all great and heroic movements the revolution of the twentieth century has been apt, to its own cost as well as theirs, to reduce individual men and women to units in its army, ciphers in its great account. The individual is nothing, the cause everything, proclaimed the Jacobins of 1793, and all world overturners since then have echoed them. Accident has helped to save Faiz from being submerged; the absence in his own country of any strong organization with aims akin to his, which has thrown him most of the time on his own resources.

Two other magnets, literary conservatism and innovation, have now for political truth or insight instead of spiritual, madness for the enthusiast's self-sacrifice in a progressive cause. Amid this readjustment or reshuffling, readers the best qualified may disagree about precise shades of intended meaning, as happened with some lines in (No.19, Freedom's Dawn, August 1947) when it came out; or they may discover esoteric messages not intended at all by the author, whose poems are sometimes meant to mean no more than they say. (No.49) for instance, is a pure lyric.

Iqbal and Faiz both looked abroad for ideas as well as at home. Their Panjab has for ages been receiving from outside, from Persian, Greek, Turk, Briton, and yet has remained itself. Iqbal was only going to one more source when he brought Nietzsche into the Panjab and Faiz when he helped to introduce Marx. Iqbal wrote of the tribulations of the poor majestically, as if looking down on them from heaven; he preached revolt of downtrodden peoples, relief of downtrodden classes by wealthier men infused with Islamic fraternalism. Faiz belonged to a generation that examined poverty at close range, with its dirt and its sores, and he learned its problems in social, economic detail. Still, Iqbal too had known of Marx, and paid tribute to him in more than one poem, and Faiz on his side has written verses religious in complexion. It was not unfitting that in 1968 he helped to design a documentary film about the life and work of Iqbal, even if this aroused some conservative criticism by its emphasis on the radical notes in the elder poet's writings. Iqbal was an Islamic thinker with a strong dash of what has been coming to be known as 'Islamic socialism'; Faiz might be called a socialist with groundwork of Muslim culture and feeling. He is indeed one of those many 'cultural Muslims' in many lands today who think of

themselves not as religious in a specific sense but as heirs to a long experiment in civilization, and to a great ethical tradition which always did homage to truth and justice and to the upright man prepared to uphold them at all hazards. Pakistan's chance of growing into a nation both truly modern and genuinely founded on an Islamic past will depend, it may appear at least to an observer outside, more on the contribution of such 'cultural Muslims' than on anything else.

Iqbal and Faiz both belong very deeply to the Panjab, and when Faiz goes abroad it does not take long for him to begin to wish himself back in his own country. But both needed a world-vision to sustain them, a hope wider than their native limits, those of a province richer hitherto in promise than in fulfilment. Iqbal after his early travels shut himself up most of the time in a small room whence his thoughts could range abroad unchecked, and draw nourishment from an Orient that he half saw, half imagined. Faiz has had for a second or spiritual home the socialist lands, the socialist world movement, and the peace movement. Disappointments with progress abroad as well as at home were bound to befall both. And though both achieved fame in their own country early, each often had occasion to feel misunderstood or isolated. Significantly, more than one poem by each of them has the title 'Solitude', and one of those by lqbal and one by Faiz (No. 8, Solitude) are among their very finest. Between these two the contrast also is revealing. Iqbal's is in Persian. He is alone in a universe that still contains a God, though a distant and silent one; Faiz's knows only human beings, and they too are distant and silent. Iqbal as in many short and some long poems pictures himself as a traveller voyaging across immensities of space; Faiz is shut up in a deserted banqueting-hall, and it is night.

It may be remarked that in all this realm of poetry death is a far less prominent theme than it has always been in Europe. Exile, separation, loneliness, take its place, in a society more closely knit, in spite of wealth and poverty, than any known to the morbidly individualistic Europe of Horace, or Shakespeare, or our own day; a society of which the literary group gathered round patron or Saqi was the microcosm. Not the disappearance from life, but the banishment of the member from the group, has had, here as in Chinese poetry, the deepest poignancy. In other poems Faiz calls up imaginary companions to converse with in solitude, even (No. 40, Loneliness) a personified loneliness. Two late poems (No.52, Black-out and 53, Heart-attack) are concerned, with illness, but what is uppermost in 'them is still not the thought of death in itself, but that of separation. Illness, like prison, divides and isolates. Social bonds so close-knit have made for social inertia, but there may be discerned in them now the possibility of transition to a new social order, of socialist character, and with this a survival of many values, human and cultural, likely to wither in a long interval of competitive industrialism, as the common man's feeling for poetry has withered in the West.

What relation there should be between artists and public movements has been the most crucial art problem of our century. In Iqbal's case it may be open to conjecture that the short poems where he was able to fuse intense personal feeling with public themes will outlive his long didactic works. Faiz too at his best, as in poem (No.19) has succeeded in fusing them. But he has been taxed with trying at times too deliberately to be progressive and writing verse more political than poetical. Some of this criticism may have been captious, but the risk is a real one.

Both frequently call up the traditional company of listeners, Iqbal whose public recitations were confined as a rule to religious or political gatherings assuming at times the figure of the spiritual leader seated among his disciples: Faiz haunted, in spite of republicanism, by whispers of long-crumbled palace halls. Iqbal was fond of the standard image of moth and candle, though his moth might now be a labouring class foolishly bowing before the idols of the rich. Faiz has been loyal to that of garden and rosebed, a rosebed now as likely as not to typify the masses, the poor, and buffeted by the rude winds of tyranny. In these literary parks the flowers are always crimson, and their colour carries overtones of passion, suffering, wounds. A comparison would be worth making with the swain and shepherdess and pipe of Europe's pastoral convention. A closer one would be with the use of peacock, deer, and red flower, to symbolize longing for the lover in the Panjab Hill paintings of the eighteenth century. In poetry the Western reader may be in danger of visualizing symbols too literally, and may do well to make an effort to see them from an indistinct distance, as things transmuted into thoughts, half-way towards the condition of the fossil imagery that all languages are strewn with.

Iqbal moved towards a Love that was a disembodied force that meant also idealism, or enthusiasm, or elan vital. Faiz began with the stereotype of the cruel beauty, but a stable marriage, and domestic life of more modern pattern than Iqbal's, carried him towards an image more human and companionable, though still only elusively suggested by comparison with Western love poetry, and, like the ghostly Saqi, interchangeable with other things, not now divine, but Cause, or Country, or People. It has been noted that Faiz has far more than Iqbal of a sort of 'masochism' habitual in Urdu poetry, which seeks the pangs of love

rather than its fulfilment. Iqbal's pan-Islamic thinking brought to his mind memories of the Muslim as world conqueror; Faiz was concerned with the Muslim of his own times, as an underdog, and in some manner was able to fuse sympathy for hard pressed labourer or peasant with the traditional griefs of the lover. In a society long accustomed to frown on free choice both in love and in political allegiance, each of these represented risk and adventure; and in Faiz's prison poems especially, separation from a woman and from a movement, or homeland, merge into one another. A Western reader may feel that this variant of the old symbolism succeeds better in a short piece like (No.25, This hour of chain and gibbel) than when elaborated as in (No.29, Two loves) though this may be found interesting as an illustration, and perhaps as a further warning against figures of speech being taken too concretely. In like fashion wine may stand exerted their rival pulls on him. His style has been altering in recent years, and becoming in some features more experimental. He has resorted fairly frequently, as he never did in earlier days, to what in Urdu is called 'free verse', which means not prose chopped up into odd lengths, as in English, but lines of varying length in one regular metre, an escape from the end stopped couplet that has so often shackled invention. This more open manner has been accompanied by a wider choice of subjects, and a more flexible imagery. In other ways whether or not belief in a planned pattern of society is related to respect for organized patterns of verse he has remained more conservative, and his influence has been against neglect of the technical side of his art. 'Faiz has brought respectability back to grammatical writing', a friend wrote lately, and has rescued some of his juniors from a morass of incomprehensibility. He himself told me some years ago that he thought the rhyme schemes in his

first volume had been too free and easy, and made young imitators careless; for this reason, and in order to give each poem a more sharply defined form, he had set himself to adhere more closely to fixed sequences. Innovation for its own sake has not attracted him; he has not translated foreign verse into Urdu, as some have done, and has shown no curiosity about possible new metres.

All this may give his mode of writing something of an old fashioned look, by comparison with the more westernized idiom of so many writers up and down the world who have so obviously read T. S. Eliot and his successors. But such writers are apt to be intellectuals without roots in their native soil, whereas a style like that of Faiz, even though in origin feudal and aristocratic, can awaken a responsive thrill in the common man. No doubt it will be called on to make further changes, in his and other hands, as time goes on. The old symbolism may be approaching the end of its useful life, having performed a final service by helping to launch modern ideas that can now take their own poetic course. Some other time honoured conventions have more obviously had their day. Complaints have been heard of too much antiquated phraseology, of poets shutting their eyes to the life around them, the changing seasons, the sun and wind and rain of the Panjab. Formerly the old dream-pictures of Persia and Turkestan could serve to express for Indo-Muslims their sense of being a community in, but not of, India. Now most of these Muslims have their own sub-Himalayan homeland, they may well want to hear from their poets about their own skies, flowers, lives, instead of those of the half-mythical native land of their half-mythical ancestors. To go on harping on too many old strings will be as fatal to Urdu poetry as to plunge into unintelligible modernism, and

leave it to linger as a mere ghost of the past, haunting the hall of Faiz's poem where no one will ever come any more.

Urdu and its poetry have had a strange history; what the future holds for them must be uncertain. It is not out of the question that Faiz may prove to have been the last important figure. Over the language itself a question-mark hangs, though the same is true in one sense or another of every language, including the one most used and most misused, English. Urdu began as the speech of the camp, and became that of the city, but it has still to show that it can become that of a nation, or with what functions for Pakistan like India is and must remain a multilingual country. In the western Panjab, today its literary stronghold, there are some who are turning their minds to Panjabi as the proper medium for poetry. To hold its ground Urdu will need to show itself able to produce more and more varied, prose, as well as poetry still able to thrill. So far, in the two decades since independence, its progress has been halting, and poetry it seems generally agreed among those competent to judge has not on the whole maintained the standard achieved before 1947. Some gifted writers have flagged, new talents of distinction have been few.

Of the older group, Faiz has gone on writing, and gone on developing, and now links his generation with the younger one where his most responsive hearers are to be found, captivated partly by his romantic note, partly by his idealism. Much remains for him to do; he has done enough to be looked upon as the most significant Urdu poet, in Pakistan or India, of the time since Iqbal, and he and his poems will keep their place as a strand in the history that our epoch has been weaving.

Chapter Twenty Three

Faiz and Punjabi Poetry

Manzoor Hussain

I have read with interest, the views of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Izzat Majeed and Colonel Nadir Ali in *Viewpoint* and *Pakistan Progressive* regarding the language question in the Punjab. It is my contention that Pakistani scholars of Faiz's generation, well schooled as they were in Arabic, Persian and English, made significant contributions to the literature in these very languages. Their attitude toward Punjabi literature was one of casual interest. The wellsprings of inspiration for their poetic expression in Urdu were Arabic, Persian and Classical Urdu scripts. However, during the sociopolitical crisis of 1968 in Pakistan, the political dimensions of the Punjabi language question clearly surfaced. Punjabi writers gained sufficient recognition that even Faiz himself joined up by writing a book of Punjabi verse. That the said book comprised mostly of translations is another matter.

Izzat Majeed made a rather sentimental case for Punjabi. Even though some of his premises were a bit shaky, the thrust of his argument was correctly targeted. Faiz, in turn, correctly identified the weaknesses in Izzat's statements and at the same time parried away the real issues at hand. For example:

1. Faiz asserted that the rulers and the ruled can have the same language. While stating this universal truth, he failed to explain why it is not the case in the context of the Pakistani polity.

2. Faiz is correct again in pointing out that there is no such thing as the 'King's Punjabi'. However, he remained silent on what the basic mode of expression of standardized Punjabi might be.
3. And is it really the case, as Faiz seems to imply, that the foreign invaders are always instrumental in promoting the development of a language and its literature?

Izzat Majeed has raised a simple but fundamental issue. How is it that Faiz, a progressive literateur and proponent of a deep love for his folk heritage, maintains such conspicuous distance from his mother tongue in his intellectual productions? Faiz simply avoided answering the question directly in his response.

Once I had an opportunity to interview Faiz for the Lahore television program *Panjnad* and I raised the same issue with him. When I persevered, despite his reluctance, Faiz mentioned two factors. One, that the Muslim scholars of his generation adopted Urdu as the national language as a counterpoint to Hindi, Second, that even when he himself tried as best he could, he was unable to write in the vernacular of masters like Bullhe Shah and Waris Shah. However, because of his extensive research and scholarship in Arabic and Persian, it was possible for him to follow the footsteps of Urdu masters. In response to further probing he even acknowledged that a deeper reason for his inability to express himself in Punjabi was his personal alienation from the folk culture of Punjabi. What Faiz could or could not accomplish has to be understood in an historical context. Faiz was truly a great son of the soil. He made many sacrifices including insufferably long stints in jail and in exile. His literary and progressive credentials are beyond question. However, his comments on the Punjabi issue, in my view, need further elaboration and scrutiny. Faiz, like others, was a product of and bounded by the historical

limits of his times. But it is simply incorrect to either impose those limits upon the current new realities or to interpret the present conjuncture in the light of past constraints.

In the absence of a Punjabi press, even the educated in our society are unfamiliar with the background of this issue. Most of the debates have been confined to a few literary circles and carried out in the oral tradition. To involve our readers in this discussion, therefore, it is necessary to delve into the background of this problem. It will then be possible to examine the weaknesses in Izzat Majeed's argument and the misplaced emphasis in Faiz's logic in the light of this historical past.

For the purposes of simplicity, I have divided Punjabi literature into three periods: the Progressive Classical Period, the Retrograde Classical Period, and the Modern Period.

Progressive Period

This period starts with Baba Farid and ends with Waris and Bullhe Shah. The other major poets of the period are Shah Hussain and Guru Nanak. Baba Farid, a follower of the Chisti School, was the first one to adopt Punjabi the native folk language as the linguistic medium of his poetry. He was followed by many a Sufi and Sadhu to develop this practice further. It should be pointed out here that not all Sufis in the region adopted this language of the people. Bahauddin Zakaria Multani, the representative par excellence of Suhrawardis, the other major Sufi school, for example, not only restricted his writings to Arabic and Persian but emphasized Sufi Formalism exclusively. The Suhrawardis were closely linked to the Royal Court and believed in dynastic succession in their school in the style of the royalty. The Sufis of Chishti School, on the other

hand, participated in people's struggles and challenged the ideology of royal supremacy. It was these radical Sufis who laid the foundation and building blocks of a folk language to express the mass ideology. Objectively they felt the need for this folk language because no other language could convey their message to masses so effectively.

These thinkers wanted to build a society that corresponded to the oppressed masses needs and aspirations. Consequently, they had to mount a challenge to the ruling class (kings, emirs, vizier, rajas, etc) and their allied civil bureaucracy in the metropolitan centers. The upper class in accordance with its prerogatives required religious unity at times (as in the case of Akbar's Din-e-Ilahi) and religious antagonism at other times (as in the case of Aurangzeb). The middle class segments, especially the civil bureaucracy, with differing religious allegiance as one source of legitimation, needed the pressure of religious antagonism. Hence, they emphasized and preached the 'truthfulness' of their respective religious beliefs. The mullahs and the pundits with their emphasis on the Formalism of religious doctrine had the most appeal amongst these middle class segments. As indicated before, the upper classes at opportune times exploited this religious refraction. However, both the upper and the middle classes advanced their cause by the exploitation of the working masses. It was therefore obviously necessary for the exploiting classes to promote and reinforce divisions among the masses so that the latter could not unite on a common platform of challenge to the privilege of the few. In this milieu of dividing religion and caste, the radical thinkers introduced the new ideas of struggle and resistance against exploitation. But these new ideas needed to be expressed in the language of the masses for effective

transmission. Consequently, the folk language and the folk doctrine in the Punjab evolved hand in hand.

Before elaborating the dominant aspects of this new folk doctrine, it is necessary to make a clarification regarding the proponents of this doctrine. There are unfounded but widely current myths that these thinkers in their daily existence were entirely removed from their society; that in pursuit of spirituality and Godhead they had retired to the seclusion of uninhabited jungles; that they mainly practiced the occult for 'healing' the superstitious masses to make a living. On the contrary they were well-versed in the traditional scholarship of their times and deliberately stayed close to major centers of population and trade routes to keep abreast of the currents of their time. Shah Hussain resided in Lahore, Bullhe Shah in Kasur, Waris Shah near Lahore and Kasur, both major cities, and Baba Farid in Pakpattan, a major trade route center. Baba Nanak even served in the government for a while. In short, they were quite well placed to be in the know of both the changing objective social conditions and the ever new strategy of the ruling classes a fundamental necessity for an adversary ideological stance. In their own social mode they played the same anti-establishment role assumed by the Greek philosophers. However, the British, in their ideological representation, transformed these radical social elements into 'spiritual' leaders and other worldly personages. These thinkers were among the best known scholars of their times and by that virtue could; love claimed high office in the ruling apparatuses. However, they were bent upon struggling for a new vision of the good society out of which emerged the folk language and the folk doctrine. The self conciousness of this mission and its attendant dificulties are the subject of these verses by Shah Hussain:

رات ہنیری بدل کنیاں۔ بانجھ وکیلاں مشکل بنیاں
ڈاہڈے کیتا سدوے اڑیا
سجن دے ہتھ بانھ اساڈی۔ کیکن آ کھاں چھڈ وے اڑیا

(The night is dark, a storm is threatening; it is a difficult path. There is no guide, but I have her word. How can I fail when I am linked up with my love?)

And what is this difficult path, the new folk doctrine? This doctrine is primarily constitutive of two distinct but related elements. First, the doctrine is founded in the unity of Ram (Hindu deity) and Rahim (the Muslim deity); namely, that all human beings are equal. The divisions of caste and religion are a deliberate invention of the upper classes. If this veil is pierced, the reality of human existence and social relationships will become more apparent. And if these diversionary quarrels are resolved, the main social contradiction will become the focus of attention. Here is how Bullhe Shah phrased it:

کِتے رام داس کِتے فتح محمد ایہو قدیمی شور
نِکل گیا دوہاں دا جھگڑا، وچوں نکل پیا کوئی ہور

(Here Ram Das, there Fateh Mohammad; Tis the old cry (of battle). When that was resolved, a deep, difficult problem arose.)

Bullhe Shah is clearly aware that after resolving the Hindu-Muslim (religious) issue, the questions of exploitation and exploited will surface logically.

In Shah Hussain, the immersion of Lal Hussain (Muslim) into Madho (Hindu); in Waris Shah, Ranjha's (a Muslim's) search for spiritual guidance from Bal Nath (a Hindu) are simple reflections of this doctrine. In addition,

their self-identification with the characters of lower classes points to the direction of the same doctrine. That Shah Hussain calls himself a 'weaver'; Waris Shah portrays his major protagonist (Ranjha) as a serf further support this assertion.

It should be emphasized here that this doctrine was not meant just for spiritual purification. Rather, it was a product of the changes taking place in society at large and as such, was both an expression and an affirmation of these social changes. And these thinkers were just getting to recognize and articulate the importance of underlying-economic forces that defined the central social contradiction. This is not to suggest that they had developed the science of class struggle in the modern sense of the term. They were only in the process of identifying within the limits of their experience of feudalism, the dynamics and predicates of class contradictions. There are many overt references to the class context of social contradictions. Vide the dialogue between Waris Shah's 'Ranjha' and 'Sati:

پیٹ واسطے پری تے حورزاداں — جاہن جن تے بھوت دے وارنیں نی
پیٹ واسطے سب خرابیاں نیں — پیٹ واسطے خون گزارنیں نی
پیٹ واسطے فقر تسلیم توڑن سبھو — سمجھ لے رنیں گوارنیں نی
ایس زمین نوں واہند ملک مکا — اتے ہو چکے وڈے کارنیں نی
گاہون ہور، تے راہک ہور اُس دے، خاوند ہور، دم ہورناں مارنیں نی

(The fairy tales and ghost stories are a reflection of the daily struggles of people. All ills, bloodshed, even the expression of piety and virtue are linked to people's everyday experiences. The one ploughs, another

harvests, the peasant toils and the landlord appropriates.)

In the last two lines, Waris Shah explicitly describes the dominant contradiction of the feudal society: 'the one ploughs, another harvests, the peasant toils and the landlord appropriates' the central dynamic of exploitation in feudalism! In an effort to change the conditions of their own existence the peasants were struggling against the caste system of Hinduism and the forcible surplus extraction of the royal agents. One aspect of this struggle was the rise of the Sikh faith which was, at one level, an effort to rid the lower peasantry of the Ram-Rahim (Hindu-Muslim) religious rivalry through an ingenious synthesis of two religious strands. *Guru Granth* the Sikh Holy Book thus contained in it the sacred thoughts of Hindu Sadhus along with the revered sayings of Baba Farid a Muslim. To highlight this synthesis and communal harmony, the foundation stone of the Amritsar Gurdwara was laid down by Mian Mir of Lahore. What I am trying to suggest is that this was revolutionary doctrine of that period in Punjab, articulating an oppositional stance both to the formalism of Mullahs and Pundits and the vested interests of the upper classes.

The other dominant element of this doctrine was an implicit projection of nationalist sentiments and aspirations resurgent at the time. This was primarily reflected in the development and particular portrayals of the life styles and visions of the fictional characters that entered the folklore. The thinkers of this school took pains to emphasize the native origins of the protagonists in the epics.

The epics of Heer-Ranjha, Sassi-Punnoo and Sohni Mahinwal are all vivid portrayals of the economic, geographic and social conditions of the times. With the evolutionary movement in the social conditions, the

doctrine was also enriched with additional subtleties and nuances, and these developments were reflected in the changing lives and visions of the two major protagonists. The Heer Ranjha of the sixteenth century was only a dim pre-figuration of the Heer-Ranjha of the eighteenth century. In Warris Shah's hands, Heer and Ranjha are not only two individuals caught in an impossible social situation, but it is also a detailed description of the system that creates those contradictions in all spheres of life. This reflects an increasing awareness of a self-realizing national identity in the Punjab.

The Retrograde Classical Period

The great poets of this period are Maulvi Ghulam Rasul, Mian Mohammed and Khawaja Farid. Because of a whole set of historical factors, these thinkers were not in search of a new doctrine. Their poetry is not as organically linked with the changes and struggles taking place in the society of their time. It seems as if they were writing for a middle class Punjabi readership. This is reflected in their choice of topical materials, their thought patterns embodied in their work and their manner of presentation. Their epic stories are by and large religiously oriented and truly fictional in content. Maulvi Ghulam Rasul's Yusuf-Zuleikha is an adaptation of the story in the Quran. The story of Amir Hamza is purely fictional, meant primarily to delineate the metaphysics of a Muslim mythology as a counterpoint to Hindu mythology. Mian Mohammad chose the medium of imported fictional story of a prince who falls in love with a fairy (a fairy tale in the literal sense). These characters are not rooted in the soil of Punjab but belong to Arabia and Iran. Khawaja Farid, however, is different in this respect. He continued the earlier Punjabi tradition in the sense that he did not only use the native characters of Sassi-Punnoo as

vehicles of his ideas but also wrote against the foreign rule of the British.

It seems that in the earlier period, the synthesis of Ram and Rahim was a symbol of the emerging unity of the Punjabi masses. However, in this period, the Muslim thinkers clearly start to develop a separate identity away from other religious tendencies. To really understand the motivating forces behind this separation, it would be worthwhile to examine the role played by the Sikh-British confrontations and the establishment of the British Raj. However, this much is clear. The Muslim writers are clearly inclined to rediscover their identity in the external, outside world of Islam. This identity is not rooted in the social conditions of the soil in which they themselves are anchored. Consequently their poetry is consumed by the intricacies of imaginary stories based in fictional love and fictional life. With this background and state of affairs in the intellectual production of the times, it is a little easier to understand why the next great poet of Punjab Iqbal does not care to write in Punjabi. The same legacy of historical limitations was bequeathed to Faiz as well. The continuation of class struggle and the sentiment of nascent nationalism in the writings of the classical period had been diluted considerably in this period. Even the poetic idioms and the writing style lost their focus and social elan. The Persian-Arabic vocabulary and sentence structures were relied on more heavily. To make up for the loss in the social content and purposiveness, the emphasis shifted to repetitive alliterations. Mian Mohammed and Maulvi Gnulam Rasul produced literally thousands of verses praising and describing the physical appearance of the fictional characters. Rhyme and meter took on the real import as in the works of the court sponsored poets. In contrast, Waris Shah wrote maybe three couplets admiring

Heer's beauty and none in praise of Ranjha. The real issue is not to count verses on particular topics of subject matter but to point out that for the writers of the progressive era, the projection of the doctrine of social conflict through poetic expression and through the interactions of 'real' characters in a real society was the central project. They had little time and patience for the purely decorative intricacies of rhyme and meter.

The Modern Period

In Punjab, the language and the consciousness of the new social doctrine evolved together. However, Punjabi never acquired the status of an official language of the court. The governing elite of the time were trained in and used to carrying out their official business in Persian. And every ruler, at least, initially had to rule through this elite. The first requirement of a ruler is to be able to rule; any language that can serve the interests of this requirement is acceptable. Although Ranjit Singh was able to organize Punjab as a distinct political force, the linguistic medium he used for his office was Persian. One can think of many reasons for this. First, Ranjit Singh himself was a Raja and obviously his was not a people's rule in any sense of the word. If Persian served the purposes of this rule, the pragmatic decision would be to take the path of least resistance. Second, Ranjit Singh may not have wanted to alienate the urban Muslims by replacing Persian with Punjabi. It is clear that Ranjit Singh was particularly conscious of keeping the Muslims as his allies. He always made a conspicuous show of celebrating Muslim holidays and festivals. Third, Ranjit Singh's rule extended up to Peshawar in the Northwest where Persian and Pushto were the languages of the people. He had also annexed Multan and Kasur from Muslim rulers. So to abandon Persian

would possibly have been a source of friction in the kingdom. Izzat Majeed is correct in historical assessment that Ranjit Singh's was a multinational state. Faiz seems to ignore this fact. Fourth, Ranjit Singh's rule was relatively short-lived and may not have allowed such an adoption.

While I am speculating about the historical factors keeping Punjabi from becoming the language of the court, I might add that the radical origins of this language doctrine co-evolution may have contributed to this exclusion. However, it could not have been the sole cause. Faiz is correct in pointing out that many languages have been both the medium of expression of the rulers as well as that of their adversarial critics. It is indeed a salutary thing that Punjabi was the language of the Sadhus and Sufis the social critics of their time but its adoption by the court would not detract anything from it. Here, the argument turns around. It is one thing to say that both the rulers and the subjects can have the same language. It is entirely a different matter when a language is exclusively the language of the court alone. The problem with Urdu is that it developed under the patronage of the court. No wonder that it reflects the highly stylized ornamentation of the court. But it lacks the rough texture reflective of the daily lives of the people. Urdu poetry is obsessed with the jugglery of the rhyme, meter and other subtleties of prosody. Its development therefore tends to be one dimensional (with the notable exception of Ghalib). It remained singularly untouched by the problems and concerns of the life-giving productive forces. It dwelt extensively on the seductive imagery of the pleasures of the nobility wine, veiled women, etc., but failed to encompass the life experiences of the peasants, workers or other toiling subjects. The criticism is not that Urdu was language of the court but that this exclusive association prevented it from articulating the concerns and

aspirations of the lower classes. The social background of the language of Goethe or Hegel is entirely different from the social background of Urdu language and Urdu poets. The language of Goethe and Hegel does not suffer from the shortcomings that Urdu does. The formers' language by virtue of being the language of the common people was capable of describing all aspects of the social existence. More shall be said on the limitations of Urdu later. But as an aside, it may be mentioned that Urdu, despite the patronage of the court and the English and recently Pakistani rulers' support, has failed in becoming a people's language. Punjabi, on the other hand, could not become 'King's Punjabi' because of a lack of any such support. However, in the era of a people's rule, Punjabi has the full potential of becoming 'King's Punjabi' but Urdu cannot overcome its shortcomings because it is not the language of the common people.

After the Sikh raj, the British, in view of their own needs and interests, helped the development of Urdu. Most of this work was carried out at places like the Fort William College and Aligarh University. The British obviously wanted to utilize the services of the old governing elites and accomplished this through partly reinforcing and partly transforming the intellectual ethos of the latter. The landed elites of the Punjab were too backward and too preocuppied with the Raj-granted estates to pursue the issue of their own self-identity with Punjabi language. Instead the shrewd ones amongst them donned the 'achkans' of Aligarh and the others adopted the silence of indifference. The Sikh integrationist movement, as it came to be led by the middle classes, moved much closer to Hinduism and away from Muslims. (The factors and reasons behind this shift of watershed significance are too numerous and complex to be addressed in this space.) This

religious differentiation proved fatal for Punjabi language and Punjabi national sentiment. Consequently, the Punjabi integrationist movement not only did not lead to Punjabi national unity at the time of independence but also failed to inspire serious scholarly discourse in the medium of Punjabi language.

Before 1947, the mainstay of progressive politics in Punjab and especially the Peasant movement were the Sikh activists; likewise the Sikh scholars were (with a few exceptions of Muslims) by and large responsible for the compilation and consolidation of Punjabi literature. The currently available Punjabi classics like Kafis of Shah Hussain and Bullhe Shah were collected and compiled by Sikh scholars. Baba Farid's Shakols are directly taken from Guru Garanth. Waris Shah's Heer is the only classic that did not require their attention, since Heer was printed and circulated every year and read and recited by every Punjabi. The lovers of Punjabi even added and mixed new verses into the original. These additions, of course, proved a heavy burden for the original!

At the end of the retrograde classical era, the Punjabi literature got watered down even further. The Sufi tradition was transformed into the rituals of Pirs and Murids; and the poetry of the classical period became the basis of formalistic imitation. The subsequent poetry is neither profound nor innovative; it is neither inspired by the inner processes of life in society, nor does it have a significant impact on these social processes. The poets reiterate the old stories in form, which are devoid of content. Like the poetry of the court, the poetic endeavour is confined to rhyme and meter, content gives way to phrase mongering, profundity to utter superficiality.

The advent of the British rule brought about some far-reaching changes in society. The governing elites learnt

to discharge their responsibilities with the help of new knowledge and techniques adopted from Europe. On the other hand, Marxism had proposed an alternative to a class based society which resulted in the epoch-making arrival of the Russian Revolution. But the Punjabi Muslim intelligentsia, especially the ones in the rural areas, remained distant from these developments, imprisoned in the confines of their old, obsolete belief systems, far removed from the new emergent world views. Another layer of the Punjabi intelligentsia, having been educated in colleges and universities, has remained reactionary because of its involvement with the meta-physical Pan-Islamism, or even when progressive, it has been swept under the whirlwinds of Urdu. At this stage then, this relationship between the Punjabi intelligentsia and the Punjabi masses is completely severed. As a result of this lack of organic links with the masses (and other concomitant reasons) this intelligentsia has been unable to make major contributions either to Urdu or initiate a new progressive stream of thought in its writings.

After the partition of 1947, the Sikhs migrated to India, and thus the Progressive movement, especially its peasant wing was deprived of its most dedicated activists. This was also a serious blow to the advancement of Punjabi language in Pakistani Punjab. The intelligentsia of Faiz's generation, because of their own acculturation adopted an attitude of silent indifference on the issue of a people's language. The Bengalis, however, challenged the proposed hegemony of Urdu at the very birth of Pakistan. Sindhis also demanded the rights of their mother tongue. Now famous Sindhi poet, Shaikh Ayaz, a contemporary of Faiz, writer of Urdu, abandoned Urdu and started to write in Sindhi his native language. Once when Tagore was asked about Iqbal's poetry, he remarked that he, Tagore, has

chosen to write in his mother tongue while Iqbal uses the medium of a foreign language. When reminded that Iqbal thinks he has no choice but to write in Urdu or Persian because Punjabi, his mother tongue, is relatively undeveloped, Tagore retorted that when he himself started writing, Bengali was not the most advanced language either!

The Punjabi intelligentsia have had a peculiar problem to deal with. If they write in Punjabi, what kind of recognition would they get? Where would they publish? What will be their readership? Would they be able to make a living through their literary works in Punjabi? In a real life situation these are genuine and vexing issues. Just as in any sphere of life, those concerned about the immediacy of securing dependable sources of livelihood, end up supporting objectively the class based structures of their society. Then revolutionary practice takes on a secondary importance. However, whether in the domain of literary production or social reproduction, it is incumbent upon revolutionaries that they not base their most important decisions either on existing fashionable trends or in the possibilities of immediate recognition. The social system in which they will be naturally accepted and recognized has yet to be constructed. (It is true that on occasion even the current social currents can extend acceptance and recognition, but the revolutionary intelligentsia does not produce with this reward in mind.) To be able to write in and develop Punjabi language, these basic issues had to be sorted out which the progressive Punjabi literati failed to do. They opted for the reward of immediate recognition and thus were unable to carry out the foundational work of a new society by expressing themselves in the language of the people. They argued that if they got involved in the long range project of writing in Punjabi and cultivating a

Punjabi readership, then the actual revolutionary work will be delayed. Their short cut has cost a period of forty years but their revolutionary practice has remained imprisoned in the convolution of their logic. The literary productions of the Urdu writers of Punjab are associated with a specific politics. The ideological leadership of the Pakistan movement was in the hands of Urdu intelligentsia of UP and CP. After the creation of Pakistan, the Civil Service was heavily populated by Urdu-speaking and upper class Punjabi cadres. These upper class Punjabis, partly because of historical reasons and partly their own vested interests, have abandoned their own identity.

The ideology of Pakistan was based on the two pillars of Islam and Urdu language. The Urdu speaking Karachiites and Punjabi ruling elites have held Pakistan hostage through the armed force of Punjabis and Pathans. The deprived nationalities fought against this oppression, and the language question arose as a demand for nationality rights. The Muslims of then East Pakistan challenged the Centre on the issue of language. Since the liberation of Bangladesh, the Sindhis have been able to assert their linguistic rights to some extent. However, Punjab is not an oppressed province, hence the Punjabi language issue could not be formulated as a nationality right. Instead, it is and takes on the form of a class issue the issue of poor people especially the peasantry asserting the right of its own language. The Punjabi people, therefore, can acquire this right through class struggle while at the same time fighting against the oppression of other nationalities. It is the duty of the Progressive writers to join this struggle through writing in the language of the people. They can support the demands of other linguistic regions by expressing themselves in their own tongue. When one does not recognize and respect one's own language, how

can one be expected to recognize and respect the language demands of others? It is this dilemma that pushes Punjabi intelligentsia towards regional chauvinism which is reinforced and exploited by the rulers.

Let us now reexamine Faiz's question whether or not the rulers and the ruled can have the same language. While it may be true for other times and places, it is obviously not the case in present-day Pakistan. In today's Pakistan, there are 60% Punjabi speaking and about 3-4% Urdu speaking inhabitants. A very small segment of the population has succeeded in imposing its language on millions of others. The role of Urdu speaking section is clear. By virtue of their social background and their upper hand in this affair, their hostility towards the regional languages and their alliance with the reactionary parties on this point is understandable. But in Punjab, it is a matter of convenience for the ruling and upper middle classes to adopt an Urduphile posture to assert their superiority of rulership. For them, Urdu is an instrumentality to separate them from the masses as well as their own past. Urdu thus plays a peculiar role in Punjab. Just as Islam is used as the building block of the pillar of Punjabi-Karachi chauvinism, Urdu is the medium of its 'cementing mortar'. This is not to suggest that the distinction of language is necessary for the expression of National Chauvinism. But only that it can be so used and has been in the case of Pakistan. It is also not to claim that the rulers necessarily impose an alien tongue on their subjects. Only that such an imposition can be, has been and continues to be used to facilitate the task of rulers. With the help of specifically selected illustrations, we cannot deny the importance of particularities of the language question in Pakistan.

The Uniqueness of the Pakistani Case

During the period of decline of the classical era, some writers continued the tradition as best they could in Pakistan. However, a major turning point arrived around 1960 when the progressive writers of the new generations started to write in Punjabi. One of these new writers was Najm Hussain Syed. Since the classical period, this was the first time that the development of the Punjabi language coincided with the rise of a sentiment of the love of land and the love of people. These new writers were well versed enough in the modern educational developments and were aware of the cooptation strategies of the upper class. Their tendency to identify with the classical period was a self-concious enterprise. Naturally, their visions of their task as well as the difficulties involved were also like that of the classicists.

The political crisis of 1968 in Pakistan advanced the politico economic demands of the people and simultaneously deepened the consciousness of the language question. The new and young progressives started to take a serious look at Punjabi as folk medium of expression. The Mazdoor Kisan Party, because of its work amongst the peasantry, started to use Punjabi increasingly in its party work. As a matter of fact, Ishaq Mohammad, a leader of the MKP, wrote a full fledged play named 'Musalli' an account of exploring the life of a low caste menial in the village economy. During Bhutto's government, Punjabi got a little more respectable reception on the radio and television to some extent; this recognition was extended to colleges and universities as well. Punjabi writers started to have access to the general reading public. And some even could make a living through their literary endeavours (not a bad thing in itself, mind you!). This is the time when even Faiz had to write some poems in Punjabi to establish his familiarity

with Punjabi (if nothing else). When other famous Urdu writers (like Qasmi) saw a scholar like Faiz move in this direction they also tried to follow suit for fear of missing the boat. People like Waheed Qureshi and Shahbaz Malik (a veritable vanguard of reaction) managed to acquire half baked credentials in Punjabi so as to counter the progressive thrust in this field, and succeeded in occupying the College-University positions in Punjabi as a preemptive move. Just the entry of an intellectual giant like Faiz in this foray was a big morale boost for the poor, helpless Punjabi writers. However, for Faiz, it was a passing whim. His heart was not in it, so one could not expect him to stay with it much longer.

At this time, there have been many stylistic developments in the writing of Punjabi. Of these, two are noteworthy. The first refers to those whose ideological bent is clearly reactionary and their style is informed by religious and regressive ethos. Another facet of the same style encompasses those liberal or progressive writers who write the Urduized Punjabi of Central Punjab and reflect all the sensibilities of Urdu literature. Many of them use the forms derived from Urdu language and in a way their writings constitute a part of Urdu literature.

The second current has to do with that section of the progressive intelligentsia who maintain that Punjabi is a distinct language in its own right. It has its own identifiable structure of organization in terms of its vocabulary and grammar. Its classical literature has a distinct character of its own. It has its own distinctive symbols and characters. The new ideas should be rightly clothed in the expressiveness of a people's Punjabi. The store of vocabulary is the classical literature and the people who actually use the language specially the rural people. And to fulfill the expressive needs of new social ideas, new

vocabulary should evolve from its own roots and live experiences. Najm Hussain Syed is an outstanding example of this kind of writer who has influenced the new generation of writers immensely. These two modes of expression are mutually conflicting. The proponents of the first type criticize the practitioners of the second by pointing out that the latters' use of language is tedious and unintelligible to the common people; that they are preoccupied with researches in words and phraseology but not creative writing. In this confrontation, Faiz's basic stance is illustrative of the Urdu writer's criticism of the so called purist Punjabi writers. To examine this critique seriously we shall examine the expressions and ideas of both sides.

The Status of Punjabi

The progressive Punjabi writers maintain that Punjabi people have one language and that in all spheres of social interaction, Punjabi should be the sole medium. They refuse to accept a secondary role for Punjabi vis-à-vis Urdu. They insist tnat Punjabi should be accorded the same status as that of Bengali and Sindhi, and that the national language should be the one representing the will and wishes of the majority of the people.

Urdu writers reject this status and demand on behalf of Punjabi. The progressives amongst them, even when they acknowledge the legitimacy of this demand, treat Punjabi as a steprelation, patronizing and condescending. They strive to prove Punjabi as being secondary to Urdu in service to Urdu but not in replacement of Urdu. Their own production continues to be in Urdu, thus the Punjabi demand appears as a blow to their own interests, they acknowleoge Punjabi to be the repository of folk music alone but maintain Urdu to be the

real vehicle or medium for statecraft. They might even concede that the tongawala, the peon, the peasant and the ruler in Punjab all speak Punjabi but still do not address why then is Punjabi not the official language in Punjab, or why is it that they don't write in Punjabi themselves. In their discussions on Punjabi, they sarcastically compare and contrast the language of Lohari Gate with that of Harem Gate and facetiously demand that the language of the 'real' common folk be the vehicle of their social intercourse. However, in their discourse on Urdu, they fail to inquire what 'gate' is Urdu spoken in. And, if it is not, why exalt Urdu to such high status. Just to appease the urban petty bourgeois? Since when is the petty bourgeois element so powerful that even the ruling class has to give in to this demand of theirs? If this petty bourgeois element is not strong enough even to demand and obtain time right to vote in the national polity, how can they manage to prevail in the language issue? An anomoly of vast proportions!

From another angle, Faiz, arguing in favor of Urdu, pointed out that foreign invaders in history have at times brought in and developed new languages like English and Urdu. Is he then consciously or unconsciously saying that Urdu as a foreign language will perform the same task vis-a-vis Punjabi in Punjab? While he is talking about historical occurence, he seems to want to apply the same logic to the present reality. But Faiz of course knows that foreign invasions don't always succeed in their mission. Bengali and Sindhi languages are positive proof of this historical phenomenon. So then it boils down to a struggle for Punjabi writers to fight off the foreign invasion and assert their on autonomy.

Urdu progressive writers don't express any fear or annoyance as long as Punjabi is restricted to Radio Pakistan, Urdu style poetry recitals or folk songs

accompanied by folk instruments. However, when it is asserted that Punjabi has its own distinctive identity and status as a language, or when innovative and serious discourse is conducted in Punjabi, all hell breaks loose. The Progressive Punjabi writers know full well, however, that unless Punjabi asserts its distinctive identity, becomes the vehicle of serious thought and expression, it cannot find true acceptance.

On the Linguistic Unity of Punjabi

Faiz excoriates Izzat for not taking into consideration the fact that Punjabi has many variations and that there is no standard 'King's Punjabi' as such. This could be said of many languages but what does that tell us? Generally, the Urdu writers infer from this that Punjabi cannot be considered the language of the Punjab because it has many dialects. One hopes Faiz does not make this inference, although his remarks could be interpreted in this fashion. The irony is that on the one hand a language without any local roots is being promoted as the official language and on the other hand a language spoken by millions is faulted fatally for having several dialects. Since there are no kings anymore to bestow the status of king's Punjabi on the language, what options do we have left? One could wait until our rulers in a spurt of generosity bestow upon us both a people's rule and a people's standard language! (Although in East Punjab, a fairly standard Punjabi has and continues to develop without the help of a king!)

Progressive friends of Punjabi maintain that even though because of social and political obstacles, a standard Punjabi has not evolved, there is a deep unifying structure of Punjabi despite the diversity of dialects. This structure is very close to that of the spoken word of the inhabitants of Western and Central Punjab. Pothahari and Hindko also

share the same structure. The same structure informs the rules of Punjabi grammar and the roots and origins of its store of vocabulary.

Most importantly, the Punjabi Classical literature follows the same form. This is the spoken word not only for the rural areas but the inhabitants of cities like Multan, Jhang and Bahawalpur speak the same language. And if the migrants from East Punjab can read and understand the classical literature of Central Punjab, it is obvious that they can do the same for the literature of Western Punjab. Besides Khawaja Farid is popular in Lahore and Bullhe Shah is well known in Multan, ample proof of the intellectual accessibility of language in different parts of Punjab.

> The task for Punjabi writers, therefore, is to develop the language on the very lines of Classical literature and the authentic live spoken word of the people. In this forward movement of Punjabi, there are possibilities of uniting these different strains into a unitary structure. It is true that there is no court patronage to carry out this task. However, a progressive intelligentsia, being partisan for a people's rule, can make headway preparatory to the progressive society of the future. (Later on we will make the same argument for the development of Punjabi grammar.)

Forms of Punjabi

Just as Punjabi has a distinctive underlying structure, its various forms are also distinct from other languages. In Urdu we have ghazal, nazm, masnavi and rubai. In Punjabi the forms are kafi, dohra, sowaya, waran and lawan, etc.

The very character of forms in Urdu is very different from those in Punjabi. The ghazal-nazm of Urdu has its own specific socio historical background which is radically different from that of kafi and waran in Punjabi. In modern times, free verse has developed in response to the new needs of expression and form. However, a truly organic form not only responds to the new needs but also is rooted in the tradition of its own society. Faiz in his Urdu writings will be an excellent example of this organic synthesis.

The Punjabi writers also are trying to experiment with new forms of kafi, dohra, waran, lawan, etc., both as a response to the new complexities of social existence as well as the context of the Punjabi tradition. Najm Hussain Syed's kafis, waran and lawans in that sense are distinct from the forms practised in the eighteenth century but also have a historic connection with them. This is the process of promoting the progressive aspects of one's cultural historical experience in the light of new realities of the present day. Now the problem is that the Urdu writers are generally unfamiliar with the classical forms in Punjabi; therefore, they cannot work with them much less build on them to suit the temper of authentic Punjabi expression. It is for this reason also that Najm Hussain Syed's writings appear to them, strange and difficult.

The other point is that when the Urduites write in Punjabi, they either use Urdu forms of expression or adopt the forms of Punjabi literature representative of the decadent period to which they feel some affinity. It is a strange phenomenon tnat even the better Urdu writers cannot seem to transcend the level of Mohammed Boota Gujrati when writing in Punjabi. Their writings remain confined to the period of decadence in Punjabi, both in torn and spirit. On this score also, Najm Hussain Syed and Mushtaq Sufi are way ahead of their rivals. This does not

mean that the Progressive Punjabi writers are imposing the forms of an old rural social culture on the current social experiences. However, we could make this accusation against the Urdu writers with some justification.

Symbols, Characters and Structure

The language of a people and its literature, through its historical experience, develops a particular set of symbols, characters and techniques of structure. Urdu and Punjabi have a very different set of such expressions. The Urdu images of Saqi, Maikhana, Mohtasib, Sefiran-i-Haram and Mahboob have their own historical specificity which is entirely different from the Punjabi images of Shauh-taklay, Varyam and Mashooq. In the background of these Urdu images, one can discern the reflections of the societies of Delni and Lucknow. Punjab has had a peasant culture. The mahboob in Urdu cannot seem to come from behind the Chilman whereas the Punjabi Mashooq cannot be restrained behind a 'chilman'. As a contrast, the Punjabi mashooq takes choori to the Bela. Punjabi existential experience simply cannot be conveyed through the images of Urdu.

This same problem was also faced by the classical poets of the Progressive period. They were formally schooled in Persian and Arabic. The intelligentsia of the times utilized the Perso-Arabic form to express their thought processes many of them even wrote in Persian. But when they chose to write about Punjabi society for the people of the Punjab, then they had to adopt the expressions of the Punjabi social experience. Then the symbols of Saqi and Maikhana were replaced by Charkha and Jolaha spinning wheel and the spinner. This was not an easy journey, but the love for and involvement with people did facilitate it. This is the process when Heer

through the process of calling after Ranjha became Ranjha herself the internalization of the experience of the other as one's own. It is quite plausible that other writers of the Perso-Arabic tradition treated this transformation with contempt as a backward motion to abandon the advanced medium of Persian-Arabic and to adopt the less developed Punjabi. As Shah Hussain said:

ملاں قاضی متیں دیندے کھرے سیانے راہ دسیندے
عشق کیہ لگے راہ دے نال نینوں لالیا بے پرواہ دے نال

(The Mulla and the Qazi admonish, the Wise and the Pious give (contrary) advice. But I am on the path of Ishq (higher state of love) knowing full well that the object of my love is indifferent.)

This is the problematic of abandoning the tried and tested ways of the conventional wisdom and charting out new directions. The love of people thus replaces the currently established wisdom as the source of inspiration and the object of recognition. This then is the internal resistance against the old and a commitment to build anew. This is to abandon the direction of foreign Arabic-Persian and replace it with orientation towards the people. When this decision is made, there is no problem of how to express the lives of people sitting in Lahore or Kasur. This is the decision that the Punjabi writer of today has to face. The Urdu writers of Punjabi always manage to skirt this issue.

Another point that needs to be considered is that as time changes, the meanings and contents of expression transform but they also stay connected to the historical past in one way or another. Even talking about a current issue, a reference is made to an expression of earlier times such that the listener can pick up its present relevance. These

expressions originally evolved out of a previous social experience and preserved in the old literature became a metaphor for some current comparable reality. For example when Faiz says:

سوئے میخانہ سفیرانِ حرم آتے ہیں

He may be referring to some current social practice but the origin of the expression, is in the Persian literature. To really appreciate the full significance and relish the colourfulness of this expression, one needs to know the relevant literature of its origin. Likewise there are myriad expressions in Punjabi that contain reflections of earlier social practices as well as symbolic relevance to current social realities. However, without any knowledge of the connection with this past, it is hard to either write in real Punjabi or to understand it. Our Urdu intelligentsia is typically schooled in the background of Arabic and Persian such that their very thought process is trained in that tradition. So even when they write in Punjabi, their expressions are derived from Persian and Arabic and not appropriate for linkage with Punjabi expression. And yet, they refuse to go through the necessary and admittedly a bit difficult adaptational practice. Their claim is that just because they can speak in Punjabi, therefore they can write in it, although the distance between the ability to speak a language and write in it is well known.

Not every Urdu speaking person can read Ghalib in his entirety, nor every English speaking person can do justice to Shakespeare. And for the art of writing, it is essential to develop and acquire the ability to link literature with the historical experience. The Urduite Punjabi writers treat Punjabi as a lesser language, and since in their own estimation they already have acquired the literary skills through their familiarity with the foreign, but 'weightier'

Urdu, they tend to believe that they should therefore be able to produce creative writing in Punjabi automatically. This is simply self deceptive. Unless they disabuse themselves of these preconceptions the serious writings in Punjabi will tend to appear to them as strange, alien and just word-minded research. They do put in their time learning the intricacies of Urdu language but certainly expect tie Punjabi writings to be constitutive of self-evident simplicity and simple minded obviousness.

It may be as well to point out that these Urduite Punjabi writers don't even represent the expressions of Mochi Darwaza either. Even the Mochi Gate Punjabi has a deeper element that can be detected in the poetry of Ustad Daman. The truth is that these writers are neither familiar with the Punjabi classical literature nor with the Punjabi folk culture; and their world of Punjab is so limited that it cannot even encompass the Mochi Gate.

Words and their Sources

In any language, the source of words is the people and the classical literature. To address the needs of new social situations, a writer can either use an old phrase invested with a new content or borrow a word from a foreign language and use it after its transformation according to the rules of the language itself. The Punjabi writers are engaged in this task today. The Punjabi writer understands that there is an underlying structure to the Punjabi language which is reflected in all its dialects.

Therefore any of the vocabulary of its dialects is an appropriate source of words to express new thoughts and needs. This appropriate expression could originate in Lohari Gate of Lahore or a village in Jhang. In our opinion, the problem is not of pure or impure or of dead or alive language. The real issue is whether a particular word or

expression conforms to the structure of the language and expresses the new thought at the same time.

I am not persuaded by Izzat Majeed's argument that we have to introduce the urban inhabitant to the rural vocabulary. The real issue is of particular requirements of a language. The main source of Punjabi vocabulary is the Punjabi peasant culture. Therefore to interpret and express many social interactions, the words and phrases are derived from the act of peasant production and its attendant artisanal activities. Since there is not much industrialization, the primitive peasant practices of production predominate this social experience. Even many of the urban workers have their recent origins in the village life. The old city dwellers also use a language very much akin to that of the rural inhabitants. And like other languages, the Punjabi language will reflect in words the social life practices of the past and present users. For example, the word 'charna' is used in the sense of shrewdness, cleverness or even deceptions. The root of this word is the act of grazing cattle; but now it is used in over new and changing social acts likewise 'gharna' has to do with the physical act of making utensils, but now we use it to describe a vast array of physical and mental constructs and so on. And since historically Punjabi society is characterized by a peasant reproduction, it will be necessary and desirable to describe many of today's acts with reference to the expressions associated with those practices. This is not unprecedented in the development of Punjabi. Classical literature has carried out this tradition of describing new thought processes and new social activities in reference to prevalent social practices with appropriate modifications and adaptations.

The real question is: Where should we go to look for these new words? The answer is to look first in that

dialect/language which has similar structure to Punjabi. And if we find several such words/expressions in these dialects, so much the better for enriching the vocabulary. For example in Punjabi one uses several words describing wife: گھروالی gharwali; زنانی zenani; تیمیں timin, رن ran; زال zal. When Punjabi will be written as it is spoken extensively many of these words will constitute the legitimate source of vocabulary.

Of course there is a lack of some kinds of words that will love to be adapted from foreign language sources an obvious example is 'motor'. The problem is not accessing other languages for appropriate words expressions but to ascertain that they conform to the underlying structure of the language when so adopted. The classical writers in Punjabi derived many expressions from foreign languages but in the process of adaptation, they were appropriated in a fashion not to appear as foreign or strange. The process of course continues till today. Look for example at Najm Hussain Syed's lines:

ڈولی تہاڈی خاص الخاص شاگردی
اوتھے سانوں بندہ ہی نئیں سی بجھدی
ایتھوں آکے اگوفون نکایا
نستی نستی آگئی
وختاں نال اوہنوں گروں لاہیاں

(Doli was the special disciple; then she did not pay any attention. Now that I can phone her, she comes running. Now I have to feign indifference.)

In these five lines there are several Persian and even an English word, but the flow and spirit of these lines is very Punjabi. On the other hand, let us look at this couplet:

طائراں دی دلسوزی رہرواں دی جانکاہی
شب دیا مناجاتاں رنجش سحرگاہی

These lines are, despite the use of some Punjabi words, typically Persian in content and form, and do not accord with the recognized structure of Punjabi. The writer of these lines remains within the thought-form process of Urdu and not that of Punjabi.

Again let us look at these lines by Zafar Iqbal. Zafar Iqbal is a well known Urdu poet, but when writing in Punjabi he does not import the Urdu form and structure in it. He uses his Punjabi vocabulary reflective of its organic link with the Punjabi social identity:

کیئی منصفی تے کیئی ججی اویار تیتھوں اک وی چھٹی نہ بجھی اویار
پہلے ہبھی وکھا کے لیسوالی ہن مارنا پیا ایں بجی اویار
پٹھی سوچ نے خوار خراب کیتا پلے پے گئی رن بجی اویار
کہنی وہینی ویہہ گیوں اج ظفر کیئی دھک جناب دی وجی اویار

This is an example of how a particular writing develops an identity with a specific language experience. To contrast پٹھی سوچ with کھتا رن; and to relate وہنی ویہہ with دھک جناب دی وجی requires the reader to be familiar with Punjabi social reality and the Punjabi classical literature. Only then one can really appreciate the subtleties being conveyed in these lines. It is just as to appreciate Faiz's verse with نہ گنواؤ ناوکِ نیم کش in it and to relish the linguistic niceties

involved one needs to be knowledgeable in, Persian and Urdu literature of old. In Urdu, nobody uses ناوکِ نیم کش in their daily expressions. It's meaning and contextual significance are learnt through scholarship. Likewise a Punjabi writer will use expressions and arrangements which are not of current daily usage, so why this aomano of the Punjabi writers that they not exceed the linguistic limits of a small segment of Mall Road crowd?

New Thoughts and New Vocabulary

The criticism that the Punjabi writers use difficult and tedious vernacular is rather misplaced. The real issue is to be able to discriminate between pompous verbosity and representations of complex ideation. For example, when the same vocabulary is encountered in folk songs, despite its unfamiliar and innovative usage, it does not appear difficult and the intent of the message is conveyed quite clearly. There is a popular folk song in Punjab:

ڈاچی والیا موڑ مہار وے ڈاچی والیا لے چل نال وے

The use of the *mahar* is perfectly simple and intelligible here. However when we use the same phrase to express *Punjabi da mahar* in the sense of the direction of Punjabi it might require a bit of reflection to understand it. And when it is used in reference to a complex philosophical discourse, it may appear even difficult. The point is that when specific words/phrases are pressed into service of new requirements, new social ideas, the words and phrases have to be reinterpreted in the new context. In the process the limits of that phraseology are expanded in this transformation. The new Punjabi writer is aware of the mission of building society on entirely new foundations. This awareness extends also towards the abridgement of

the obvious gap that has developed between the new advanced arts in the world at large and the under development of Punjabi itself. It has been already stated that since the eighteenth century, Punjabi has been the vehicle of the ideological struggle. Since these two hundred years, society itself has become a lot more complex. The renovation of the forms and contents of the vernacular is a part of reinitiating that struggle. The words are not difficult by themselves. Rather the interconnections of words/ phrases are acing worked over into new and different forms. See for example Najm Hussain Syed:

نویاں پتراں دے آ ورنگ منائیے
مر مر کے جیہڑے نویں نہ ہوئے
اوتاں رہسن جیوندے موئے
پولے پیریں آوندیاں اگے
دم دم تیل چوائیے۔ رنگ منائیے

The poet is conveying the message of new discourse in society with an image of the arrival of new leaves in the trees. Implicitly, the new has to be built on the supercession of the old. Likewise, for an individual activist, there is an internal struggle. One has to supercede the desire for a class-based society to seek the basis for a new social arrangement. The symbol of rebirth after death has been a constant refrain in the classical literature whicn is now being used in the new context to suggest that one who does not go through this metamorphosis is really living a dead life. The passing of the old and the ushering in of the new is a constant life process which the poet refers to as the soft-footed welcome arrival, the arrival of a new bride

is celebrative. Now these reformulations are taken from the very common social practices of Punjabi living reality even for the inhabitants of Lahori and Haram Gates. But to appreciate the intent of this new message it is necessary that one be aware of the underlying current of Punjabi as well as be progressive in one's outlook. However, if one's knowledge of Punjab and Punjabi is restricted to the folk song broadcasts of Radio Pakistan, one is likely not only to miss the drift of the new idea but perceive it as too tedious a usage. This then becomes the basis for the criticism levelled against Punjabi writers by the Urduites.

So much for the verse. Let us look at the prose in Punjabi. A story writer generally does not find it difficult to use the current language to develop plot and characters. Consequently, in different regions of Punjab, many a writer has produced exquisite fiction in Punjabi.

However to convey new knowledge and new ideas in prose presents linguistic difficulties. The difficulties pertain both to a dearth of vocabulary and the reformulation of the essence of the new ideation. Many aspects of new knowledge and ideas are so new to our society that that very fact makes their communication difficult apart from the problem of language, besides Hegel and Marx are difficult to interpret in any language. Any production involving their complex philosophical formulations will appear difficult in the beginning. Gradually, however, as new ideas are assimilated in the living sociality, they begin to appear as comprehensible and relatively easy.

Another point needs consideration. As knowledge develops in complexity, it becomes increasingly separate from the daily vernacular of the language. The complexity of ideation necessitates developing of specific, definitional

vocabulary which does not constitute people's daily practice of linguistic expression.

The writers of Punjabi who are trying to bring these new ideas in the language are new to this craft themselves. The halting character of their language reflects this lack of a long developed practice. When the practice is well established, it then becomes relatively easier to communicate the complexities more simply for the writer.

One could now argue: Why not borrow this new vocabulary from Urdu? But if you look at Urdu, apart from works of verse and fiction, there is not much prose written to convey new ideas, new techniques of knowledge, etc. What little there is, is highly problematic and inaccessible. This can be attributed to the tact that there is a real dearth of new vocabulary in Urdu; firstly, because Urdu has such a brief history; secondly, because it lacks the vocabulary of producing classes, thirdly, because it has hardly any folk literature (at least for the Punjabi writers); and fourthly, the common people do not speak Urdu thus depriving Urdu of a major source of new words. The producing classes in Punjab speak Punjabi. Urdu for them is the language of book knowledge, not a part of their social existence.

Besides, Urdu has from the beginning adopted the Perso Arabic grammatical structure, rather than developing its own identity. When new words were needed, again Persian and Arabic were used as direct sources. And these words were generally taken without being appropriated or Urduized consequently, Urdu could not serve as language of social knowledge on its own. This is no problem for the religious establishment. For them the reading of texts is meant for atonement in the hereafter. The irony is that what the Progressive writers produced was also read in the same spirit because there was no organic people's link between the language and ideas being communicated. How

can a laborer fathom that is meant by اپنی بازدگی میں ہوئی اور لغلانہ بیسمزی the utter dependence of Urdu on Persian-Arabic is exemplified by the title of the dictionary of term's قاموس الاصلاحات How can one look for the meaning of terms when the meaning of the title is so obtuse.

In the light of the above comments, it is clear that there is not much that a Punjabi writer can appropriate from Urdu. The Punjabi writer will remain handicapped without resisting the easy temptation of Urdu and without adapting the current direction of Punjabi. Punjabi has an inexhaustible store of vocabulary, a language rooted in the productive practices of a vast populace and extensive folk literature. These are the foundational requirements of developing and transforming new knowledge into the linguistic expression of Punjabi. Urdu is limited from its very birth and there is no objective basis for it to transcend those limits. The Urduite Punjabi writers find new Punjabi difficult only because they have not engaged in communicating the new knowledge of new ideas to the common people.

**Translator's Note: This essay was written originally in Punjabi and circulated amongst interested parties over a year ago. We sought permission from the author to publish it in its present lore, since, in our opinion, it constitutes a very significant, if controversial, contribution to an ongoing dialogue on the language question in Pakistan. Copies of the Punjabi original are available upon request from Pakistan Progressive.*

Chapter Twenty Four

Faiz Ahmed Faiz Poetic Expression and Socio-political Change

Izhar H. Kazmi

Ghalib's dictum that he who becomes a man of vision, does not please the religion of his forefathers, has aptly been demonstrated by Faiz in his life and his writings. Born and brought up in the traditional life style of a middle class Muslim family in the upper Punjab. Faiz had imbibed and accepted the feudal values both in life and literature till the greater recession of the 1930s and the founding of the Progressive Writers Movement.

There does not seem to be any particular incident in the early life of Faiz that may have prompted or provoked him to think about changing the sorry scheme of things. Of course, politics were in the air. Under the 1935 Act a measure of representation in the legislatures was given to Indians after a struggle of some 50 years. Students all over India were very much involved in the struggles for independence against the British Raj. Poetic symposia had become a forum for political awakening and Faiz as a practitioner of poetic craft of the traditional style took part of his first collection *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*, is by and large traditional with few undiscernable strains of thoughts and feelings that could indicate the potential later to bloom into revolutionary poetry. The writers of the 1936 Progressive Movement including Faiz were mostly romantics having but little direct experience of the plight of the masses. Their audience was the newly educated lower middle class coming out of educational institutions with liberal ideas of

freedom of thought and equality of opportunity and finding socio-political subjugation and repression all around them. The world of Faiz as it stretches into the second part of his first collection is the world of a love lorn young boy awakening to the reality of social repression, economic deprivation, religious bigotry and political subjugation but having little existential experience of the same. Faiz started venturing out into the new diction of blank verse employing but few new symbols. The only difference with the old poets, according to Faiz, was 'they already had a tradition of political rhetoric while we were introducing a new traditional of political lyricism'

Political lyricism was more or less a kind of romantic idealism cherished and purveyed by even the political groupings of the war era. Faiz viewed the war as an anti-fascist struggle on the happy conclusion of which India's future also depended and he joined the war propaganda machinery and soon became a colonel which Faiz proudly proclaims, was a high as Muslim officers went in those days. But his tenure in the army almost devoured his creative self. This period of hibernation continued even during and after the great holocaust that was the partition of India. The greatest socio-political change in the sub-continent brought out little from the creative genius of Faiz excepting a lament on the disillusionment after independence.

Faiz had seen the exercise of power in his army days and after independence. It seems he had begun to have doubts whether poetic expression alone could effectively bring about socio-political changes. He was the founder member of the Progressive Writers Association. Faiz was also active in the trade union movement as well as in the journalistic field. He was the editor of *The Pakistan*

Times, a progressive daily which wielded political influence over alignments of feudal lords running the country.

Consequently the day to day delving into power squabbles kept the poetic muse away and Faiz produced little till the early fifties when he was accused of conspiracy against the State and sent to jail for four years. The jail experience has been aptly summarized by Faiz in these words, 'Politicians had been going to prison but the idea of a poet being incarcerated was something new. Besides, the years in prison formed a highly productive period in my life. Going to jail was like falling in love again.'

The jail period brought about a transformation in Faiz. Before that he was primarily a lyric poet, singing of love and longing for a beloved. The very concept of love in Faiz's poetry underwent a change during his prison days. In the Muslim society of those days love between the sexes was a forbidden fruit. The entire fabric of Urdu love poetry is made up of pangs of separation and longing for union with the beloved. While in jail Faiz was deprived not only of his beloved but also of the freedom of movement. Love of the beloved person merged with the love of his country to the extent that for Faiz they became synonymous. His jail poetry therefore encompasses the entire fabric of society and is fired with the burning desire to change the sorry scheme of things. There is also the fervent call to lay down all one holds dear for the cause of emancipation and freedom.

Faiz thus gave to Urdu poetry which no body had given before, an all embracing love for the land and for the ideals of freedom, equality and social change. In his hands, the entire symbolism of Urdu poetry assumed a much wider world of meaning to the extent that most of the similes, metaphors, epithets and symbols will never be the same again.

As the genius of Faiz matured, his vision encompassed not only the socio-political change in his country but also the struggles, and strivings of the down trodden and freedom fighters in the Third World. In an incomplete poem written during the year of his death Faiz reviews the battle ground of his life-long fight for his ideals and renews his call for sacrifice:

> Days of sorrowful remembrance
> Once more draw near,
> Days of lamentation by souls
> That have been seared:
> The air shivers in anticipation as the season gropes for changes,
> The days for heralding spring once more draw near.
> Flowers lie crushed on the verdant sea of grass
> The lonely stake stands hushed, sprinkled with blood.
> Let him who dares gather of companions a horde....
> There's an invitation to dance on the edge of the sword
> By the king's command for allegiance we all stand condemned...
> Either by submission or a refusal to bend.

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Chapter Twenty Five

Faiz: A Poet of Mansur and Qais

Agha K. Saeed

It is indispensable to know the paradoxical imperatives of Mansur and Qais before decoding Faiz, or else it will be difficult to make out how Faiz has painted a picture larger than the canvas.[1]

The Tradition of Mansur

Hussain ibn Mansur Hallaj (- 922), perhaps the best known Sufi, was an intensly political intellectual. His politics was rooted in Sufism and its world view. Referring to Sufis like Al-Junaid and Mansur Hallaj, W.M. Watt correctly points out:

> 'One of the aspects of the Sufi movement to which comparatively little attention has been given is its relation to contemporary history and social conditions. The Sufis were those members of the intellectual class who had a genuine spiritual concern which had not been choked and killed by the worldliness'.[2]

Mansur was born in a period when the Muslim empire was experiencing a cataclysmic struggle among the institutions of the Caliph, the *Vizier*, and the *Mufti*—with each vying for greater administrative authority and jurisdiction. This power struggle was further complicated by *Sunni* and *Shia* sectarianism. But the major crisis, at

least for some like Al-Ghazali and Mansur Hallaj, was the capitulation of the scholar-jurist before the ruling elites:

> 'Under Umayyad regime, while the class of religious intellectuals was still in embryo and they scarcely deserved to be called 'scholar-jurists', a member of this group might act as a judge temporarily on behalf of the Caliph or a provincial governor, but he often did so without receiving any remuneration; this was presumably possible because he was still receiving a stipend from the state like all other Muslims. The recognition given to the scholar-jursits at the beginning of the Abbasid period (750 A.D. onwards) together with the apparent disappearance of the system of stipends led to a new situation A new Islamic educational system developed directed to the study of the 'religious sciences' and particularly of Islamic law, and those who were engaged in this way normally expected a career in some branch of public service, of the administration of the empire'.[3]

Mansur Hallaj, who from a Sufi realm, became a blazing symbol of unrelenting criticism of the degenerative practices of the ruling elites, especially the establishment intellectuals, was originally received with some warmth by Imamite Shias, who saw a convergence of views and hoped for a convergence of interests with Mansur and his followers, but later on as Mansur became increasingly more outspoken in his criticism of all the ruling elites and his criticisms started to become popular with the, masses, 'Abu-Sahil and other Imamate leaders became bitterly hostile to

him. (and his) teaching that any man might rise to sanctity and obtain supernatural charisma'.[4] (Emphasis added).

It was under these circumstances that Mansur Hallaj cried out *Ana-ul-Haq* which poet-philosopher Iqbal has translated as: 'I am the creative truth'. It was this creative truth that shook up the newly emerging order and its leaders.

> 'Here a weak, thinly, bag of bones was challenging them: 'You are not the only standard-bearers of truth, I am' this was about the same thing that a Greek philosopher had said many centuries before Hallaj: 'Man is the measure of all things'. To hear that even a plebian can possess truth startled the common folks'.[5]

Tradition of Qais

The tradition of Qais, the tradition of love, runs parallel to the Sufi tradition. Both require selfless devotion and sacrifice. Both deal with love and truth but with somewhat different references.

In Punjab, where Faiz and his poetry grew up, the tradition of Qais, here symbolized by Ranjah, the most popular Punjabi romantic hero, is the most powerful and comprehensive civilizing intervention in the Punjabi psyche. In the ideal realm, Ranjah is a hero and Kaido is a villain. (Kaido is Heer's uncle and Heer is Ranjah's beloved). But in the practical realm of daily life anyone acting like a Ranjah is seen as a villain and anybody acting as Kaido, the protective and jealous uncle of Heer, is lauded as a defender of honour and shame. Caught in this conflict of its soul, Punjab draws upon the image of Ranjah, through innumerable variations on the same metaphor, to elevate itself to a higher moral and spiritual plane. In

essence, Ranjah is a symbol of the emanicipation of heart for the common man and the emancipation of the soul of the entire people.

It is noteworthy here that Ranjah who sets out twice to look for Heer does so the first time as a suitor and the second time as a *Jogi* (a mystic). The blending together of these two realms is generally accepted in the Muslim psyche as evidenced by the bulk of Arabic and Persian poetry.

The Poetics of Mansur and Qais

Faiz was born into a literary milieu that had worked Mansur and Qais into an elaborate and complex tradition and symbology. Its complexities included many currents and counter currents of eternal concern with time, space, forms, power, beauty, happiness and even struggle. On the very practical level, this tradition lauded the common man and extolled the marvels of love. But on a different plane, it struggled to free itself of the tyranny of time.[6] Yet at another level it divided itself into two minds: those of a Sufi and a lover. 'Maya' a Sanskrit word can be usefully employed to clarify this divide. Drawn from a root word 'ma', to form, the word *maya* itself means 'the capacity to produce forms'.[7]

The lover operates at the level of 'ma' and the Sufi operates at the level of 'maya'. The Sufi is cognizant of the power that produces forms and is, therefore, able to see beyond the forms and immediate appearances. The lover, on the other hand, lives by the forms. It is precisely these forms, appearances and faces that he is attracted to. But soon this gap between the Sufi and the lover begins to disappear when the lover too is forced to learn the essence of these forms.

The Starting Point

Mysticism, love, and Urdu poetry; Faiz began with the convergence of these three traditions. From these sources Faiz was to gain his inspiration, his idiom, his symbols and metaphors, and even a sense of his station in life.

Though initially influenced by English literature, Faiz never indulged in, as Victor Kiernan tells us, a direct imitation. 'Faiz seldom if ever did this directly.' And how could he. It was precisely the subtlety of the English literature that he was drawn to. He was inspired by the romantic tenor of the 1920s, which was, as he himself tells us, 'a somewhat odd period of care freeness, prosperity and passion-rousing, wherein, in addition to important national and political movements, in prose and poetry, by and large, instead of serious thought and observation, the style was somewhat of flirtation and romancing. But even before we could get a good look at it the visit with the final friend was over'.[8]

Soon the brief spell of prosperity was over, and Faiz like many others was forced to take a hard look at life. As he was still trying to sort out this mishap, he had, by virtue of his style and brilliant expression, established himself as a distinguished poet. Soon thereafter he was to shed all his gloom and confusion and become fully involved. In his bid to pour bounty on the desolation of the age, Faiz went through two interesting stages. In the first stage he wrote:

ان دمکتے ہوئے شہروں کی فراواں مخلوق
کیوں فقط مرنے کی حسرت میں جیا کرتی ہے؟
یہ حسیں کھیت، پھٹا پڑتا ہے جوبن جن کا
کس لیے اُن میں فقط بھوک اُگا کرتی ہے؟

یہ بھی ہیں، ایسے کئی اور بھی مضموں ہوں گے
لیکن اُس شوخ کے آہستہ سے کھلتے ہوئے ہونٹ
ہائے اُس جسم کے کمبخت دل آویز خطوط
آپ ہی کہیے کہیں ایسے بھی افسوں ہوں گے
اپنا موضوعِ سخن ان کے سوا اور نہیں
طبعِ شاعر کا وطن اِن کے سوا اور نہیں

(The multitudinous creatures of these glittering cities, why do they keep living only in desire of death? these lovely fields, whose bloom is bursting out. Why does only hunger keep growing in them? These also are themes, others also like them there may be. But the slow opening lips of that saucy one Ah, the cursed alluring lines of that body! You yourself say, will there be such sorceries anywhere else? My theme of poetry is nothing else except these, the native land of the poet's nature is nothing else except these.)

Here, his gaze slowly moves over the miseries, deprivations, and practices destructive of human soul. He acknowledges all this but finally merges into the delightfully mercuric thought of the beloved. With the cognizance of beauty, the poet considers his mission to be successfully completed. This apparent success then becomes a two-fold inspiration: one, as Schiller tells us,' if we were to solve the political problem in practice, (we must) follow the path of the aesthetics, since it is through beauty that we arrive at Freedom'.[9] Two, Faiz also realizes that Truth, even as an aesthetic value, is far superior to

beauty and without truth freedom remains but a shadow of a dream. Therefore, soon enough, Faiz, soulfully affirming beauty, sets out to search and depict the Truth of his age:

مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ
میں نے سمجھا تھا کہ تو ہے تو درخشاں ہے حیات
تیرا غم ہے تو غمِ دہر کا جھگڑا کیا ہے
تیری صورت سے ہے عالم میں بہاروں کو ثبات
تیری آنکھوں کے سوا دنیا میں رکھا کیا ہے؟
تو جو مل جائے تو تقدیر نگوں ہو جائے
یوں نہ تھا، میں نے فقط چاہا تھا یوں ہو جائے
اور بھی دُکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
اَن گنت صدیوں کے تاریک بہیمانہ طلسم
ریشم و اطلس و کمخاب میں بُنوائے ہوئے
جا بجا بکتے ہوئے کوچہ و بازار میں جسم
خاک میں لتھڑے ہوئے خون میں نہلائے ہوئے
لوٹ جاتی ہے ادھر کو بھی نظر کیا کیجیے
اب بھی دلکش ہے ترا حسن، مگر کیا کیجیے
اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ

(Do not ask from me, my beloved, love like that former one. I had believed that you are, therefore life is shining; There is anguish

> over you, so what wrangle is there over the sorrow of the age? Woven into silk and satin and brocade, Bodies sold everywhere in alley and market, smeared with dust, washed in blood. My glance comes back that way too: what is to be done? Your beauty is still charming, but what is to be done? There are other sufferings of the time (world) besides love, there are other pleasures besides the pleasures of union; do not ask from me, my beloved, love like that former one.)

This is where Faiz makes his individual contribution to the tradition of Mansur and Qais. He brings the Sufi and the lover into a revolutionary reflection. A new perspective is born, not by denying, but by affirming and then transforming the Sufi's and the lover's values. From here on, we see wounds next to flowers in Faiz's poetry and we smell the fragrance of the martyr's blood.

Professor Amin Moghul, in one of his articles on Faiz, observes, 'Faiz's tone is mild; it has a stability, a congruity, an equinamity. Faiz is a leisurely poet'.[10] It is the same 'leisure' that Sufi seeks through emancipation from time. Professor Moghul has summed up the uniqueness of Faiz's creativity in one observation. We must, however, remind ourselves that akin to this mild toned leisurely style exists in Faiz a bonfire of dare and determination, of which he was keenly and artistically aware. Faiz harnessed this fire to forge new forms aimed at greater human happiness; to enrich the whole revolutionary experience with a musical civility.

ان طوق و سلاسل کو ہم تم سکھلائیں گے شورش بربط و نے
وہ شورش جس کے آگے زبوں ہنگامۂ طبلِ قیصر و کے

(I and you will teach to these iron collars
and chains the clamour of lyre and flute,
that clamour before which the tumult of the
drum of Caesar and Kai is feeble.)

With Faiz revolution is a cultural and creative activity. For him it means civilizing thoughts, passions, and actions. It is noteworthy that Sufi, lover, and revolutionary are all three in their own distinct ways involved with this civilizing activity. Faiz has articulated a common purpose out of shared values. In addition, as a poet he has brought courage, fearlessness, and poetic determination to the fulfillment of this purpose.

Faiz thinks through the mind of a revolutionary; feels with the heart of a lover; speaks the language of a poet; and is in constant consultation with the Sufi's conscience. His conception of Time is tempered with Sufi's images.

جو رُکے تو کوہِ گراں تھے ہم جو چلے تو جاں سے گزر گئے
رہِ یار ہم نے قدم قدم تجھے یادگار بنا دیا

Also in Faiz's revolutionary, the glamor of a lover has blossomed.

کرو کج جبیں پہ سرِ کفن مرے قاتلوں کو گماں نہ ہو
کہ غرورِ عشق کا بانکپن پسِ مرگ ہم نے بھلا دیا

Faiz's revolutionary being a poet articulates new paradigms for the discovery of beauty and truth; being a lover longs for the signification of his innumerable kinships with life; and being a Sufi constantly experiments with the secret and private forms of time. His fascination began with

the pretty sight of the beloved. Then it turned from the darling to the darling homeland, but only to move on to liberate the eternal story of men and women from the shackles of renegade forms and to place it in the context of global peace, without ever losing sight of or empathy for the wretched of the earth. For Faiz's revolutionary the greatest joy is that:

اب کوئی طبل بجے گا نہ کوئی شاہسوار
صبح دم موت کی وادی کو روانہ ہوگا
اب کوئی جنگ نہ ہوگی، نہ کبھی رات گئے
خون کی آگ کو اشکوں سے بجھانا ہوگا
کوئی دل دھڑکے گا شب بھر نہ کسی آنگن میں
وہم منحوس پرندے کی طرح آئے گا
سہم، خونخوار درندے کی طرح آئے گا
اب کوئی جنگ نہ ہوگی، مے و ساغر لاؤ
خوں لٹانا نہ کبھی اشک بہانا ہوگا
ساقیا! رقص کوئی رقصِ صبا کی صورت
مطربا! کوئی غزل رنگِ حنا کی صورت

(Now no drum shall play, nor shall any cavalier set off at daybreak to the valley of death; now there shall be no war, nor ever late at night will fire in the blood have to be quenched with tears. No heart shall quiver at night, nor in any courtyard shall causeless-anxiety come like an ill-omened bird, shall fear come like a bloodthirsty beast of prey. Now there shall be no war,

> bring wine and wine cup! There will never' have to be spilling blood nor shedding tear. Cup bearer! Some dance, like the dance of the morning breeze; Minstrel! some song, like the colour of henna.)

The ultimate destiny of his poetry is emancipation of mind ad heart:

ابھی چراغ سر رہ کو کچھ خبر ہی نہیں
ابھی گرانئ شب میں کمی نہیں آئی
نجات دیدہ و دل کی گھڑی نہیں آئی
چلے چلو کہ وہ منزل ابھی نہیں آئی

> (The lamp beside the road has still no knowledge of it; In the heaviness of night there has still come no lessening, The hour of deliverance of eye and heart has not arrived. Come, come on, for that goal has still not arrived.)

Sensing the need for freedom with a poet's heart, Faiz turned towards anti-colonialism based on a Marxian outlook which at one time prompted him to put on the military uniform to oppose Fascism, but here too with his pen and not a rifle. Later, in Pakistan, outraged by the re-introduction of colonial controls, and ignited by his own optimism, Faiz cut in an ever brighter idiom and with his ceaseless devotion to the darling-homeland fired up the imagination of his fellow citizens. The following poem, which richly deserves to be subtitled as the *democratic anthem* of Pakistan, provides an intimate account of Faiz and everything near and dear to his heart:

نثار میں تری گلیوں کے اے وطن کہ جہاں
چلی ہے رسم کہ کوئی نہ سر اُٹھا کے چلے
جو کوئی چاہنے والا طواف کو نکلے
نظر چُرا کے چلے، جسم و جاں بچا کے چلے
ہے اہلِ دل کے لیے اب یہ نظم بست و کشاد
کہ سنگ و خشت مقید ہیں اور سگ آزاد

(May I be a sacrifice to your streets, oh fatherland, where it has become custom that no one shall go with head lifted, and that any lover who comes out on pilgrimage must go with furtive looks, go in fear of body and life; applied to the people of heart now there is this method of administration, that stones and bricks are locked up, and dogs free.)

The uncharted journeys of struggle, which came after he had been harassed, maligned and imprisoned, took him to foreign lands and newer destinies. His concerns became global and his passion universal. A world map emerged in his poetry. He looked at Africa and called out:

آجاؤ، میں نے سن لی ترے ڈھول کی ترنگ
آجاؤ، مست ہوگئی میرے لہو کی تال
آجاؤ ایفریقا
آجاؤ، میں نے دھول سے ماتھا اٹھا لیا
آجاؤ، میں نے چھیل دی آنکھوں سے غم کی چھال
آجاؤ، میں نے درد سے بازو چھڑا لیا
آجاؤ، میں نے نوچ دیا بے کسی کا جال
آجاؤ ایفریقا

('Come, Africa!' Come, I have heard the ecstasy of your drum Come, the beating of my blood has become mad 'Come Africa!' Come, I have lifted my forehead from the dust. Come, I have scraped from my eyes the skin of grief, Come, I have released my arm from pain, Come, I have clawed through the snare of helplessness come Africa!)

Setting his eyes on America, where the so-called defenders of democracy and freedom had convicted and executed the renowned progressive scientists Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Faiz touched many hearts with his brilliantly sorrowful poem about the Rosenbergs that was written in autobiographical (and not biographical) tone. Faiz's elegaic poem extolling the martyrdom of the Iranian students, killed in cold-blood by the U.S. supported regime, continues to echo in Urdu literature, most recently in Ahmed Faraz's poem on Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

A Suitable Symbology

Faiz uses such constructions, metaphors, and idioms that, firstly, for the tiniest instance brighten the passions of love and longing, and then immediately submerge into a poetic affirmation of the efforts to bring about the emancipation of heart and soul. Faiz found in the human body, especially the hands, an endless possibility for symbols and metaphors:

۱۔ اجنبی ہاتھوں کا بے نام گراں بارِ ستم

۲۔ اور ان ہاتھوں سے مَس ہوں گے یہ ترسے ہوئے ہاتھ

۳۔ سالہا سال سے یہ جکڑے ہوئے بے آسرا ہاتھ

۴۔ آنکھوں سے لگایا ہے کبھی دستِ صبا کو
ڈالی ہیں کبھی گردنِ مہتاب میں بانہیں

۵۔ پکارتی ہیں باہیں بدن بلاتے رہے

۶۔ تیرا ہی عکس ہے ان اجنبی بہاروں میں
جو تیرے لب، تیرے بازو، تیرے کنار ہیں

۷۔ صبا کے ہاتھ میں نرمی ہے ان کے ہاتھوں کی

۸۔ آباد ہے وادیٔ کاکل ولب شاداب حسینِ گلگشتِ نظر

۹۔ آجاؤ میں نے درد سے بازو چھڑا لیا

۱۰۔ گلے میں تنگ تیرے حرفِ لطف کی باہیں

This indicates yet another level of Faiz's aesthetic involvement with human potentialities.

A Provocative Propostion

In the small circle around Noon-Meem Rashid and Mira Gee, Faiz is a controversial poet. Noon-Meem Rashid, time and again, asserted that 'Faiz is a feather weight poet'.[11] Those sympathetic to this view contend that Faiz is more politicized than what is permissible in poetry. Yet others find him old fashioned in form and mediocre in sensibilities. There are those, however, who contend that Faiz was not only the greatest among his contemporaries, but also that he might well be the *last great Urdu poet.* Professor Victor Kiernan writes:

> Urdu and its poetry have had a strange history; what the future holds for them must be uncertain. It is not out of the question that Faiz may prove to have been the last important figure. Over the language itself a

> question-mark hangs, though the same is true in one sense or another of every language, including the one most used and most misused, English. Urdu began as the speech of the camp, and became that of the city, but it has still to show that it can become that of a nation, or with what functions for Pakistan like India is and must remain a multilingual country. In the western Panjab, today its literary stronghold, there are some who are turning their minds to Panjabi as the proper medium for poetry. To hold its ground Urdu will need to show itself able to produce more, and more varied, prose, as well as poetry still able to thrill. So far, in the two decades since independence, its progress has been halting, and poetry – it seems generally agreed among those competent to judge -has not on the whole maintained the standard achieved before 1947. Some gifted writers have flagged, new talents of distinction have been few.[12]

It is just not possible to discuss Professor Kiernan's observation at any length here. Faiz, however, went through yet another stage of excellence after Professor Kiernan had expressed the above opinion about him.

Palestine blossomed in Faiz's imagination during the last years of his life, and brought a new, somewhat sadder, shade to his poetry. Between Palestine and Pakistan the poetic journey was concluded.

In the concluding years of his life Faiz had gained such a universal recognition that at that stage, as Ahmed Faraz puts it, 'neither his friends could add to his stature

nor his detractors could lessen it'.[13] Even his personal and ideological enemies, even the staunchly pro-U.S. bureaucrats, even the rightist ideologues, seek refuge in his poetry. How this could be is best explained by Mahmud Darwish, the great Palestinian poet and personal friend of Faiz, who writes:

> It is possible
> It is possible at least sometimes...
> It is possible especially now
> To ride a horse
> Inside a prison cell
> And run away...
> It is possible for prison walls
> To disappear
> For the cell to become a distant land
> Without frontiers.
>
> What did you do with the walls?
> I gave them back to the rocks
> And what did you do with the ceiling?
> I turned it into a saddle
> And your chain?
> I turned it into a pencil.
>
> The prison guard got angry
> He put an end to the dialogue
> He said he didn't care for the poetry,
> and bolted the door of my cell.
>
> He came back to see me in the morning,
> He shouted at me:
>
> Where did all this water come from?

I brought it from the Nile
And the trees'?
From the orchards of Damascus
And the music?
From my heart beat.

The prison guard got mad;
He put an end to the conversation
He said he didn't like poetry
And bolted the door to my cell.
But he returned in the evening.

Where did this moon come from?
From the nights of Bagdad.
And the wine?
From the vineyards of Algiers.
And this freedom?
From the chains you tied me with last night.

The prison guard grew so sad...
He begged me to give him back
His freedom.[14]

Let it be said a Sufi insight (of transcending the forms) has gained a revolutionary completion here.

References

1 This is best defined by Faiz himself:

ہمارے دم سے ہے کوے جنوں میں اب بھی خجل
عبائے شیخ و قبائے امیر و تاج شہی
ہمیں سے سنتِ منصور و قیس زندہ ہے
ہمیں سے باقی ہے گل دامنی و کجکلہی

2 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinberg: The University Press, 1963) pp.130-32.

3 *Ibid.* pp. 109-10

4 *Ibid.*, p.104.

5 Aslam Sirajuddin, 'Hussain Bin Mansur Mullah – Dusht-e-Soos Main', *Fanoon*, January 1986, p.142.

6 Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan*, translated by David Shea, Anthony Troyed (London: The Octagon Press, 1979), p.35.

7 S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Harper Colphon Books, 1973), pp. 40-41.

8 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Collected Works*, (London: Third World Publications, 1985).

9 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, translated by Reginald Snell (New York: Friedrich Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p.27.

10 Amin Moghul, 'Faiz Ki Shairi: Chund Ta'asurat', in *Lao to Kuttal-Nama Mira,* edited by Abdullah Malik (Lahore: Nigarshat Publications, 1982).

11 This was communicated to me by Ahmed Faraz in a personal conversation in El Cerrito, California in 1983.

12 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *Poems by Faiz*, translated by V.G. Kiernan (London: George Allen and Union Ltd., 1971), pp. 43-4.

13 Ahmed Faraz, *op.cit*.

14 Ben Benni, trans., *Bread, Hashis and Moon: Four Modern Arab Poets* (Greenboro: Unicorn Press, Inc., 1982).

Chapter Twenty Six

Faiz – A Personal Memoir

Khalid Hassan

Faiz returned to Pakistan in 1982, something he had wanted to do all along. Perhaps it was not an easy decision, but the fact that he finally took it, adds to his greatness. He left Pakistan in 1977 and though he travelled extensively during the next few years in Europe, the Middle East, and the Socialist countries and North America, Beirut remained his home.

At the end of 1981, when he passed through Karachi, he had some trouble getting out. His plane was diverted and he left the airport to see friends. Getting out wasn't so easy. It is to the credit of Pakistan's immigration and intelligence officials that they were able to determine the identity of the passenger who, it now turns out, was or had been on their list of 'undesirable elements'. He was, in the end, allowed to leave, which only shows that good sense is not entirely extinct in the Land of the Pure.

Some people advised Faiz not to return to Pakistan permanently, but though he listened to them patiently, his mind was made up. It is another matter that since his return, men like Mian Mohammed Shafi (Meem Sheen)[1] have been exhorting him to devote his life to the service of Islam. I suppose they know what they are talking about, because they have always claimed to be guided by the divine imperative. It is easier to argue with God, but those who presume to act in His name, are a little more

intractable. In my case, Faiz knows his Meem Sheens well, and over a fairly long period of time.

I am glad Faiz has returned to Pakistan. Like a shaft of sunlight, his presence will irradiate a landscape full of forebodings and echoing with empty words and even emptier slogans.

In 1981, I wrote to Faiz in Beirut asking him if he was disillusioned with what had happened to Pakistan in recent years. He wrote: 'What has happened is not our preordained destiny, nor what the people necessarily want. Islam is not a stumbling block in the march toward progress. The laws of politics and social change, unlike the laws of nature; do not always follow a straight line. There are many deviations, but this should not be taken to mean that they do not operate. Delays can occur, but ultimately truth manifests itself. No night is without end.'

Faiz has never really written about himself, though he has not discouraged others from doing so. Those who should write about him either do not or, when they do, the narrative tends to be marred by ineptness, platitudes and sentiment.

The *Nawa-i-Waqt*[2] variety is, of course, more familiar to both his friends and detractors. In the newspaper's stylebook, a reference to Faiz must read: famous communist poet and red intellectual and Rawalpindi Conspiracy case convict, Faiz.[3]

Although more has been written about Faiz's poetry than about the man, no sustained attempt has been made at a comprehensive and critical assessment of his work. Since I am not a literary critic and have no ambitions in that direction, I would only like to write a personal account, having known him over a long period of time.

What was admiration has turned into love. Ironically, it is mostly in his exile that I have had the

opportunity to spend time with him. My account is, therefore, confined to our contacts in London.

This is one city he has always returned to. The only time he decided to make his permanent home abroad, he chose London. This was in the early 1960s; but he went back. The poem:

> yar ashna nahin koyi takrain kis se jam;
> kis dilruba ke nam pai khali saboo karain[4]

was written during those days and may contain a clue as to why he chose to return. I like to imagine the poem came to him in a pub, and when that happened, he was alone.

But that is what I like to imagine. Faiz is never alone in London. He is always surrounded by people: people he knows and people he does not know. I have never been able to tell the difference, because to him no one is a stranger. His warmth and concern for people friends, foes, and acquaintances is like London rain which falls, in Oscar Wilde's phrase, on the just and unjust alike.

Faiz knows his ways around London. Actually, his sense of direction, like his memory for names and faces, is quite uncanny. London is a city without end, especially if you get lost, which I often used to do, particularly in its eastern and southwestern stretches. I remember a few summers ago getting lost while driving Faiz to somebody's house. For some time, I kept pretending that being a Londoner, by circumstance if not by choice, I knew more or less exactly the' direction in which I was headed. But I was lost and I knew it. 'I am lost,' I told Faiz sheepishly. He told me to stop the car, which I did. He surveyed the area nonchalantly, and then told me to proceed straight, and then take a couple of complicated turns and, to my great surprise, we arrived at the house we were looking for. He

told me by way of explanation that he had been here once before.

And once when I was driving him to Highgate, by mistake I got on to a dual carriageway which seemed to be going everywhere except Highgate, I thought Faiz had not noticed, until he said to me, 'If you don't take a right turn soon enough, we would end up in Oxford.'

But then Faiz should know his way around London. This is a city he has known since he was a young man. I might add that I am acquainted with people who have been visiting London for years but who would be quite unable to take you from Knightsbridge to Regent Street unassisted. Faiz knows his streets and it is perhaps not an accident that the street is a recurring image of great power in Faiz's poetry.

I think in the winter of 1981 something happened that changed the London Faiz had always come to. It will never again be the same place for him. He may not even want to, come here as often as he used to. As one grows older, one begins to accept the finality and inevitability of death; but the sense of loss and bereavement increases with years. For Faiz, the death of Comrade Mohammed Afzal one cold day in February 1981 would remain a devastating blow. They were very close friends.

Faiz always used to stay with Afzal in Highgate. It was only in recent years that Faiz began to put up with Majid Ali and Zahra Nigah[5] in their Knightsbridge flat. Afzal had not been well for some time and Faiz did not wish to impose himself. I did not know Afzal in Lahore, because he left Pakistan before my time, as it were. But I had always known who he was and how much he had contributed to the trade union movement in the early years of independence. In London I always found him to be an acerbic man with a dry, almost cynical sense of humour, a

bit on the quiet side and somewhat impatient with what displeased him. Faiz once said to me that Afzal gave the impression of being irritable because of his indifferent health. In his younger days, he was a live wire, a man of tremendous courage and commitment.

I have met people like Afzal abroad, committed people who once believed in the people's struggle and strove to make Pakistan a secular, progressive and tolerant state, but who were either hounded out or made to reach the end of their patience. Over the years, the issues which once seemed so important began to lose their urgency, giving place to detachment and cynicism. If in physical terms their lives became more comfortable, spiritually they perhaps diminished a little. A bit of guilt, a deep tinge of unhappiness and a feeling of loneliness that exile, forced or self-imposed, invariably brings.

Faiz and Afzal had a deep relationship. They could sit in a room for hours without speaking and yet remain fully aware of each other, an alchemy only an old and intensely shared friendship can produce.

When Afzal died, Faiz was in London. A friend told me that Faiz looked shattered. He became very quiet, cut his visit short and flew back to Beirut.

When Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum[6] died I was in London. So was Faiz. He mourned deeply but in silence, not a silence of acceptance but one of limitless sorrow. I began to talk to Faiz about Sufi Tabassum, the way he was, of evenings spent with him, drinking and listening to poetry, of his humour and his life long poverty which he bore with such cheerful, mystic indifference. I wanted Faiz to talk about him.

At one point he spoke: 'We were merely amateurs. He was the master. When one was in doubt, one would go to him. He could set your doubts at rest on language,

idiom, diction, syntax or usage. Now that he is gone, there really is no one one could think of turning to.'

Tajammul Hussain[7] once told me a delightful story. Faiz one day asked Sufi Tabassum to interpret a Persian couplet for him, since he found it to be obtuse. Sufi asked him to recite the couplet which Faiz did. 'Well, no wonder it is obtuse to you. You are not reading it right,' he said. Indeed, he was the master.

Faiz, when talking about himself, never employs the first person singular. He either uses its more impersonal plural form or the third person idefinite. It is always with some effort that he can be made to talk about himself. This humility is not our characteristic as a people. Here again, Faiz is unique.

When Faiz is in London, there are a number of people he phones as soon as he has installed himself. News of his arrival spreads like a jungle fire and unless you are early, your chances of getting him more or less by himself are extremely unlikely. I have always recognized the privilege that being present in his company confers. He is a man of immense affections. Ashfaq Ahmad[8] once described Faiz as a *malamti Sufi*.[9] The amount of abuse and calumny Faiz has taken in his life should certainly place him in the mystic order.

Faiz once wrote: *Jo ayai ayai ke hum dil kushada rakhte hain*,[10] a line which epitomizes his attitudes to life and people. Everyone wants to be around him. There are some who would insist on actually sitting at his feet, but when he is not around, they would make nasty, small-minded remarks about him. Though Faiz is perfectly aware of this strange, unpleasant breed, he has never shown it. One such person, who expresses great devotion to Faiz in his presence, once spoke about him in highly dismissive terms to me. He said that Faiz had outwritten himself and

was now only a shadow of the poet he once was and should really know it. I mentioned this to Faiz, but he merely smiled.

Faiz is an immensely patient man. At times, it can be taxed to the breaking point, especially when he is in London. This happened one evening at the BBC club. He got caught up with a friend who has lived in London for well over 20 years, but has now reached a point where he is incapable of listening to anyone when he is holding forth himself. He keeps talking incessantly, without pause or respite. It is not that he is particularly committed to certain subjects. If one day he is obsessed with Soviet foreign policy, the next time he may be declaiming his views on the vagaries of the English weather, the problem of Afghanistan or the deteriorating quality of English lager.

The evening I am referring to lasted two hours. I am doubtful if Faiz was able to get a single word across. Others came and were driven away by the soul-destroying boredom of the monologue. Faiz persevered without complaint, though he did say later that next time, he would like to be elsewhere when the gentleman was around.

In London, as no doubt elsewhere, he has to suffer crank versifiers. There is one I know who published, not long ago, a collection of poems at his own expense and arranged for a series of 'opening' ceremonies to be held to launch the book. When Faiz is in London, he not only has to take many phone calls from him, but actually has to listen to his poetry for extended periods, a crucifying experience without question, especially for someone of his sensibility. At the end of the ordeal and while it lasts, Faiz has nothing but encouraging words to offer. He has never spoken disparagingly of anyone, least of all, poets, Iftikhar Arif[11] who wrote a poem attacking Faiz's lack of 'involvement' in the 1971 war, told me that not once had

Faiz mentioned the poem to him nor shown the least sign of disapproval. On the other hand, he has always treated Arif with great affection.

Faiz is not an admirer of politicians in general. He has few illusions about them. He has known too many of them over too long a period of time to be otherwise. But there are exceptions. With Mian Iftikharuddin,[12] his relationship was a special one. He was the first editor of his paper, the Pakistan Times and shared Iftikharuddin's idealism and commitment to progressive causes.

Faiz feels that Iftikharuddin was one of the first politicians to foresee the obscurantist hell hole Pakistan was moving towards. He tried to fight a rearguard action but was defeated by a miscellany of interests, both bureaucratic and political. Had the Azad Pakistan Party[13] not been sabotaged, the course of Pakistan's history might well have been different.

Faiz also speaks with deep admiration about Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy.[14] I reminded him that after he died, a western newspaper wrote that of the two links between East and West Pakistan Suhrawardy and the Pakistan International Airlines one was now gone. It wondered how long the airline would be able to keep the two halves together.

Mumtaz Hasan[15] used to say: if this is the West wing and that is the East wing, then the question arises, where is the bird? I asked him if he knew the answer, but if he had one, he chose to keep it to himself.

Faiz has invested his entire life, sometimes it seems to me, in the maintenance of friendships. There can be no lessening of affection for those who have been once admitted to his circle, whenever he is in London, he keeps an evening free for Faizul Hasan Chaudhry,[16] whom he once described to me as Hamid Akhtar's[17] Ludhiana crowd.

I think it was in the summer of 1979 when his children were in London to see him. Alys[18] had gone to Canada that we spent an evening at Faizul Hasan's house. Earlier, Faiz had for a time felt unwell in Beirut and though everything had been found in order later, nevertheless he had been put on a drinks and cigarettes quota. That evening, both Saleema and Muneeza[19] were keeping an eye on him and though Faiz buckles under any kind of discipline, he was accepting their occasional admonitions with more than good grace.

Faiz is a compulsive smoker.[20] Unlike most smokers, he has no brand loyalties. He will smoke anything. He puffs or drags at his cigarette in rapid-fire fashion and before it is half finished, he buries it absent-mindedly in the ashtray. One has hardly been snuffed out when he begins to reach for another. It does not seem as if he enjoys smoking, but he must obviously do so since he has been smoking for so many years. When he was in jail during the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, he stopped smoking for a while.

That evening at Faizul Hasan's house, he was constantly being told by one or both of the girls that he had already gone through his quota. Saleema said that her father was really unwell in Beirut, a diagnosis which Faiz dismissed with something like 'Bhai koi aisi baat bhi nahin thi.' He always talks about himself with imprecision, almost as if it was someone else he had in mind.

One day at Majid Ali's house, a visitor who obviously considered himself well versed in international affairs, was trying to tell Faiz to exercise his influence with the Russians to persuade them to pull out of Afghanistan.

'Let me tell you one thing,' Faiz said. 'The Russians talk politics seriously only to members of the Communist Party. I am not one. If you are a member, you are treated differently, on another wavelength. This is something very

basic. To them the party is the prime thing. It is true that I am accorded every courtesy and respect because of the Lenin Peace Prize, but it is not for me to talk hard politics to them.'

To someone else, who thought Faiz could flit in and out of Moscow as and when he pleased, Faiz said that the Russians were formal people. In order to go to the Soviet Union, one would have to be invited. To materialize on a day of your choosing at the Moscow airport won't do. 'It is not their style,' he added.

I never saw so much of Faiz in Pakistan as I saw of him in London. For one thing, when I moved to Lahore, he was living in Karachi and when he returned to live in Lahore, I was abroad. I have known Faiz since I was a boy. He was a friend of my father through M.D. Taseer.[21] The friendship between Dr. Taseer and my father, Dr. Noor Hussain of Kashmir, went back to the early 1930s.

One of my first memories of Faiz is in our house in Gulmurg, Kashmir. 'He would go to bed with his shoes on,' my mother once told me. When Faiz married Alys, they came to Kashmir and stayed with us for a while. My brother Bashir recalls driving the two of them in an old Austin-7 around the Jammu hills. The fact that after partition, we settled down in Sialkot, is another link with Faiz. That city is in his bones. He grew up there, went to the old Scotch Mission School and then Murray College, before moving to Lahore to join the Government College.

In London we talked a great deal about his childhood in Sialkot and his growing up in that city. His father took him to Maulvi Mir Hasan[22] and Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim Sialkoti,[23] asking the two great men to accept his little son as a student. Faiz learnt Arabic in Maulvi Mir Hasan's maktab. He was to study under him again at Murray College. Faiz studied the Quran, hadith

and fiqah in Maulvi Ibrahim's mosque. The mosque still exists and is known as such. Faiz told me that Maulvi Ibrahim was one of the greatest Islamic scholars of his time.

Nothing that Faiz learnt as a boy from these two men has time or age managed to erase from his memory. He began to memorize the Quran in those days and committed nearly half of it to memory. He quotes from it often. He is equally familiar with all the great Quranic commentaries and the principal works of Islamic fiqah. His knowledge of Islamic history is almost encyclopaedic, but like all things else, he wears it lightly and with grace. Some years ago Altaf Gauhar[24] said to Faiz in London, 'perhaps it is time that you return to Pakistan and teach them Islam because enough heresy is being committed in its name.'

At one point, Faiz wanted to return to Sialkot and live there permanently. He feels tremendous nostalgia for the dark, cobbled streets of the city where he grew up. People in Sialkot still think of him as a native son. I remember Faiz coming to Sialkot in the early 1950s to preside over a debate arranged by the Murray College Students' Union. As he arrived at the college gates, he asked if Chacha Mohammad Din was still around. Chacha used to sell oranges and lobia outside the college when Faiz was a student. Many generations of students had passed through his hands. I think he died in the late 1960s. He was a great character and everyone owed him money including Faiz, Chacha told me. Chacha saw Faiz and shouted, 'Oai Faiz, have you forgotten Chacha?' Faiz went across and they talked about old times as if nothing had changed.

One man Faiz often remembered in London was Khwaja Ferozuddin Faiz who died several years ago. Feroz and Faiz were boyhood friends and though Feroz was not a poet, his last name was taken to cement forever his friendship with Faiz. In Sialkot he was popularly known as

Feroz 'Tommy', because of his debonaire good looks and high style.

I once reminded Faiz that the people of Sialkot had always excelled in finding nicknames for their leading sons. There was Shafi 'Bottle', called that because when he laughed, it sounded like a soda bottle being uncorked. Then there was Shafi 'Bagla', nearly seven foot tall and much resembling the bird in question or Mian Mohammad Bashir 'Cobra', who had a surrealistic resemblance to the reptile after which he was named.

Faiz joined the Government College, Lahore in his third year. He took the written entrance examination and was successful. He told me that soon after he joined, they were given an essay to write. The one Faiz wrote was considered so good that it was put on the college notice board, making Faiz an instant celebrity. A few weeks later, the class was given another exercise. Faiz, confident of his prowess now, wrote, what he thought was a profound and scholarly piece. He was quite shocked to discover that he had been given low marks. When he asked his teacher, an Englishman whose name I do not recall, he was told, 'The first thing you wrote was original. It was your own. This time you have merely reproduced what you read elsewhere. You have an original mind. Keep it that way. Don't reproduce what others have said.'

I asked Faiz several times in London to put together an anthology of Urdu poetry. He said he had done one several years ago. The manuscript, of which there was only one copy, was taken by a woman who was living in New York at the time. She got married after a while and lost the manuscript in the process. Poetry and marriage obviously make poor companions.

Faiz had once compiled an anthology of Persian poetry with Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum. I am not sure

where the manuscript is. Sufi was not averse to handing it over to a lady either. As long as it was Farida Khanum,[25] the manuscript should be retrievable.

Faiz is a devotee of Iqbal, but of the living poet, not the fossil he has been turned into by the religious commissars and various departments of the government. Faiz has often talked about editing a selection of Iqbal's poetry with a critical introduction.[26] He told me that Iqbal's real views on Islam and other fundamental questions were contained in his English writings, something the mullahs do not read. If Iqbal did this to put his message beyond the reach of the obscurantists, little did he realize that most of the obscurantists in Pakistan were destined to be English-speaking.

Faiz told me that when he was a young boy, he was taken to the annual session of the Anjuman-i-Islamia, Sialkot, by his father. Iqbal was present. Faiz delivered a recitation from the Quran, as little boys still do. 'I was so tiny,' he recalled, 'that I was made to stand on something so that people could see me. After I had finished, Iqbal patted me on the head with great affection. My father, of course, knew him well and intimately'.

Faiz has travelled a great deal in recent years and though he briefly made Beirut his home, he never thought twice about not returning to Pakistan. To him, Pakistan has always been the place where he belongs and which is home. In 1980 he was offered a succession of appointments of great prestige in India, including a visiting professorship at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. He refused it like the others. Visiting India, he told me, was different, but to accept an assignment there would amount to accepting permanent exile from Pakistan. I once asked Faiz if I should take a job in Delhi which had been offered to me at a time when I needed one urgently. 'That would amount to cutting

your umbilical cord with Pakistan. Go elsewhere if you have to.'

I do not write this in an effort to assuage our reactionaries, because they are beyond redemption or argument. Faiz once said, 'Those whom God Himself chooses to mislead, no mortal can help.' I merely record this because he said this to me with some finality on two occasions. Normally, he is not the sort of person who passes final judgements, leaving them to God, the people and history.

Faiz is the only man I know who is not a shopper. He often stayed with Majid Ali in Hans Place, faring Harrods, but, as far as I know he never went inside. And to say that of a Pakistani in London is to place him in the Nobel Prize category.

One summer in 1980 when Faiz was in London, he asked me to pick him up in the morning. I materialized in the early afternoon. It was a nice day with clear skies and rare London sunshine. We drank a couple of gins and tonic and then Faiz said, 'Let's go and see a film.' This sort of threw me as I had never thought of Faiz as a moviegoer. He told me that in Beirut, he had become one. We went looking for a movie to see, but couldn't really find anything. At one point, we found ourselves in the Euston Road area. Faiz suddenly remembered that there were a number of Indian and Pakistani places there which served halva, puri and honest to goodness lassi. He had been there a couple of times before. So after successfully beating the London one way system the ultimate imperialist conspiracy a friend of mine calls it we found a place called Diwana. Faiz was absolutely thrilled with the name. 'That is really delightful Diwana,' he said a couple of times. I thought of all the havoc this word had wrought in Urdu and Persian poetry, Faiz himself having been responsible for some of it.

We ate a good deal, drank, what turned out to be, just as Faiz had promised honest to goodness lassi and, in between, dealt with many of his admirers. When you are with Faiz, you get used to being accosted by strangers, Faiz meets them as if he had known them for years. He may not always remember names, but he almost never forgets a face.

When Faiz is in London, his nostalgia for Pakistan intensifies. London has so many reminders of Pakistan: the people, the restaurants, and the old imperial link. One way he sublimates this nostalgia is by visiting places which, in the words of Athar Ali,[27] are pure Mozang one such Mozang is a kebab and tikka place in East London, called (what else!) The Lahore Kebab House.

Faiz told me about it once. One evening we decided to go there. I have two friends in East London, Mahmood Durrani and Munawwar Dar. Dar is a big, handsome Kashmiri from Sialkot who has done very well in the wholesale garment trade and is something of a dada of the area.

When we arrived in the East End, Dar and Durrani were waiting for us. We were a bit late, but the Lahore Kebab House had been informed and they were expecting us. The place had been kept open beyond normal hours. We ate as we would have eaten in Mozang. The place may not have met with the approval of a British health inspector, but it was the genuine article, not one of the sanitized tourist traps of central London.

Earlier, Durrani who runs a leather garment business off Commercial Road had taken us to the famous East London pub Jack the Ripper. Inside the pub, there are framed facsimiles of newspaper pages of the day, describing in blood-curdling detail the surgeon like handiwork of old Jack. The pub also displays, a large

wooden plaque, commemorating the deeds of the mysterious and possibly mad murderer. Nobody knows who Jack the Ripper was because he was never caught and the murders ceased, suddenly.

However, East London has not forgotten him. On the other hand, it has honoured his Memory by naming a pub after him in the very area where he practised his gory craft. We drank to Jack the. Ripper after Faiz had carefully read all the plaques and newspaper facsimiles celebrating his exploits. On one thing, there is agreement. Jack the Ripper was a gentleman from the leisured classes. Long live the British leisured classes.

Faiz came to London a few weeks before his seventieth birthday. 'You have reached the biblically-ordained age of three score and ten,' I said to him. Someone asked him who the rather personable lady he had taken to lunch a day earlier was. 'Before I disclose the identity of the personable lady in question,' Faiz replied, 'may I state for the record that I have retired from this department.' Naturally, nobody believed him. To women, he has always been a charmer.

Whenever Faiz comes to London, he always takes a short trip to Birmingham. He generally stays with Badar and Nasreen, a couple he has grown increasingly fond of over the years. And then Saleem Shahid[28] lives there too, as do Zia Mohyeddin[29] and Naheed Siddiqui. I wonder how many still remember Hafiz Hoshiarpuris[30] famous ghazal, allegedly inspired or dedicated to Saleem or Razi Trimizi,[31] or both. People have, of course, been adding on to it, but the stamp of the master is unmistakable.

In 1980 when Faiz came to London, I offered to drive him to Birmingham in an old Toyota. 'We should go through Oxford,' Faiz suggested. 'It is a nicer drive (he does not like motorways) and there is an old friend in Oxford

from the Delhi days I have been meaning to look up.' We left London around midday. It is always a hassle to get out of London. It can sometimes take you more time to get out of London than to get from London to Birmingham. It began to snow. The M-40 which takes you to Oxford was quite treacherous and I did not have snow tyres. The car was not pulling too well, some water having gone into the plugs. However, Faiz was paying no attention to our slow and somewhat hazardous progress.

I believe he is like that. Alys told me that when a bomb blasted away an apartment building next to theirs in Beirut, Faiz woke up briefly and then went back to sleep without much ado.

As we continued our journey, I fed a Taj Multani[32] cassette into the car stereo, a scintillating rendition of Khwaja Ghulam Farid's kafis.[33] 'This is poetry of a very high order,'. Faiz said. Faiz was deeply moved by one of the lines ishq hai sada pir. I rewound the tape and played it again. 'Listen to it carefully,' Faiz said. 'You will see that one of the greatest poets of the Punjab has no hesitation in making profuse and liberal use of Persian and Arabic words. This is something people like Najm Hussain Syed[34] either lose sight of or do not understand when they go on about the 'purity' of the Punjabi language.'

I said that Khwaja Farid had even employed an English word in one of his most famous kafis. Sona nahin soonda, dukhan di appeal ai. 'That is the point,' Faiz said. 'To the poet, the supreme thing is poetry. He is not a grammarian or a lexicographer. Language is his tool, the material he uses to create. It is thus subservient to him, not he to it.'

This conversation which I reproduced in an article in Viewpoint, led to lively controversy. Izzat Majid, a young writer whose occasional pieces I have always found sharp

and perceptive, wrote a somewhat intemperate article in *Viewpoint*[35] attacking Faiz and accusing him of 'cultural terrorism' and downgrading Punjabi. To everyone's surprise, since Faiz never replies to criticism, he wrote a rejoinder.

Though Faiz touched upon a host of points, I would like to quote one particular passage: 'Unfortunately, some language enthusiasts among us today have made it a part of their credo that to prove your love for Punjabi, you must detest Urdu as the handmaiden of decadent courts and to demonstrate your loyalty to Urdu, Punjabi must be despised as the gobbledegook of illiterate yokels. This approach obviously stems from petit bourgeois linguistic Jingoism although it is frequently veneered with progressive terminology.'

But this was an aside. I must return to our drive to Oxford. We managed to arrive in one piece. The car did not conk out as I had feared and Farid stayed with us through the driving snow, a far cry from the burning deserts where he had created poetry of such intensity and splendour.

We found the house we were looking for. Faiz found it, in fact. His friend turned out to be a lady of great charm. She was in Delhi during the war, working for the information department of the Government of India or the cell responsible for war propaganda. She later married the author Guy Wint. She has a daughter by him, Indira Joshi, the actress.

Mrs Wint is a Buddhist and teaches comparative religions at Oxford. Faiz asked her how her spiritual progress was going and she said, 'Well, one keeps on, doesn't one.' Faiz told me that she was an accomplished contemplative. We had a lunch of bread and cheese which we washed down with some beer. Faiz and she talked about old times. Mrs Wint must have been a smashing

looking woman during her days. 'So she was,' Faiz told me later. 'Quite the toast of Delhi.' Buddhism must have come later, I thought. 'Keep in touch Faiz. It was good to see you,' she said as we took our leave.

In Birmingham, as elsewhere, Faiz's tribe was on the flourish. We spent long afternoons and evenings at Badar and Nasreen's house. Salim Shahid, who only technically lives in Birmingham because almost all the time he is somewhere in London, was in town. He began to tell Faiz about some of his plans. He is always full of them. Faiz asked him what had happened to the restaurant he was going to open many years ago. 'That is still on the cards,' Saleem replied, though I don't think Faiz believed him. I may add that Saleem Shahid is one of the best gourmet cooks I have known. If he does one day open restaurant and becomes the head chef, he will send a lot of people out of business.

Almost on the eve of his brithday, Athar Ali and I spent a long evening with Faiz in a Knightsbridge pub I am very fond of. It is called the Turk's Head. They always have a log fire in the winter and you can stand, with your back to it and sip your drink. That evening Faiz only wanted to be in Lahore. He said he would like to be with his family and friends. He asked about Abdullah Malik,[36] Hamid Akhtar, Mazhar and Tahira, I.A. Rahman,[37] Syed Wajid Ali[38] and so many others. Lahore has always been Fair's city of lights.

At one point I said to Faiz, 'You know how much you are loved. You have always been more than a poet.' He paused, and then said with some difficulty, 'I do not know why so much of peoples' affection has fallen to my share. One is only a poet after all.' We said no more. Faiz did not go to Lahore.

He told me a delightful story about the big Lahore meeting which had been held to celebrate his birthday next time he came to London. In the evening, the police picked up most of the leading participants from their houses and dumped them in the Kot Lakhpat jail. As this distinguished crowd entered the precincts, a curious prisoner asked Shoaib Hashmi, Faiz's son-in-law, which political party they all belonged to. 'The birthday party,' Shoaib replied.

Faiz once said to me: 'It is not that one has no fight left. It is only that one is not as young as one once was. It is difficult to take physical punishment when one is older. The spirit is willing, but the body is reluctant.'

The intensity of his commitment to freedom and justice has grown rather than paled with time. In exile, it burns even brighter. He has always been a fighter, though everyone must fight after his own fashion. Revolutions ultimately flow from ideas and few poets have advocated revolution with such passion and consistency as Faiz.

It is true that he is not the instant rhymester that many people who attack him, are. If the test of patriotism is writing *taranas* for Radio Pakistan, then Faiz is neither a poet nor a patriot. But who has written with more pain, love and hope about the elusive goddess of freedom than Faiz.

His great poem on the 1965 war 'uttho ab mati se uttho'[39] remains one of the most moving works of its kind in literature. Those who attack Faiz for lack of patriotic feeling, are the same conscience sellers who were cerebrating the great Islamic victories of Yahya Khan's tigers in East Pakistan in 1971, and who now sing Zia's praises. The sycophants, who castigate him, are the same men who were dancing in the streets with roses in their buttonholes, celebrating Ayub's victory in the 1964 elections. And while they danced, Faiz transcribed his

anguish in 'kahin nahin hai, kahin bhi nahin lahoo ka suragh'.[40]

I have no desire to write a defence of Faiz the man or poet. To me, his poetry is indistinguishable from the way he has lived his life. Perhaps, people like Dr Ayub Mirza do not understand this. In his book on Faiz, *Hum Ke Tehre Ajnabi*, he wrote that Faiz was not really a revolutionary, but just a poet and were it not for some of his more committed friends who got him into trouble with successive governments, he would be quite happy just writing poetry. Dr Mirza, I am assurred, is a great devotee of Faiz and, more than that, an excellent children's doctor. If I were him, I would continue to follow my noble profession and stay away from judgements on subjects I do not understand.

This was written in 1962.

References

1. Mian Mohammed Shafi 'Meem Sheen': veteran Pakistani Journalist, who was probably the finest political reporter of his generation, but with the years, has grown quite reactionary in his views. He was also a nominated member of General Zia-ul-Haq's Majlis-i-Shoora or Consultative Assembly of hand-picked men and women.
2. *Nawai Waqt*: a right-wing national Urdu daily newspaper from Lahore which has consistently attacked Faiz and all liberal and progressive ideas.
3. In 1951, a group of army officers was apprehended along with some civilians, including Faiz, for conspiracy to overthrow the government. Faiz was kept in custody for nearly four years.

4 Freely translated, 'with neither friend nor acquaintance in sight, I sit in the tavern, wondering with whom I should clink my goblet of wine'.

5 Majid Ali and Zahra Nigah: Majid Ali is an international economic and financial consultant and is married to the popular poet Zahra Nigah who burst into prominence in the early 1960s.

6 Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum: celebrated scholar of Urdu and Persian and a poet of unique lyrical power, both in Urdu and Punjabi. He taught Persian and Urdu most of his life at the Government College, Lahore.

7 Tajammul Hussain: man about town, poet, litterateur, but, more than that what they call in Punjabi 'friend of friends'. Younger brother of Altaf Gauhar, Field Marshal Ayub Khan's Information Secretary.

8 Ashfaq Ahmad: popular short story writer and radio and television playwright.

9 A school among sufis which carried their rejection of conventional religiosity to the extent that they were branded as heretics and sinners.

10 Freely rendered, 'let him enter who so wishes, I have a welcoming heart'.

11 Iftikhar Arif: Pakistani poet, now living in London where he is director of 'Urdu Markaz', the only literary avenue available to poets and writers' from India and Pakistan.

12 Mian Iftikharuddin: firebrand Punjabi politician who joined the All India Muslim League after a long association with the Indian National Congress. A close friend of the Nehru family.

13 Azad Pakistan Party: founded by Mian Iftikharuddin in the early 1950s as a coalition of progressive and liberal elements.

14 Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy: eminent Bengali; politician who was also briefly Prime Minister of Pakistan and perhaps the only politician who could have ensured national unity.

15 Mumtaz Hasan: celebrated civil servant whose contributions to literature, especially the study of Iqbal, archaeology and the arts would be long remembered.

16 Faizul Hasan Chaudhry: aligned for years with the progressive and trade union movement in Lahore. He has been living in London for well over twenty years.

17 Hamid Akhtar: well-known Pakistani writer, editor and film-maker. One of the stalwarts of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Bombay and Lahore.

18 Alys: Faiz's English wife who has stayed by his side through good times and bad. A journalist of note in her own right and known for her work in the women's movement and social uplift projects.

19 Saleema and Muneeza: Faiz's daughters. Saleema is a painter and designer and Muneeza was, for many years, a producer with Pakistan television.

20 Faiz no longer smokes, following doctors' orders, but says he still misses it badly.

21 Dr M.D. Taseer: eminent poet, critic and educationist. He was married to Alys's elder sister, Bilquees.

22 Maulvi Mir Hasan: distinguished scholar and teacher who taught both Iqbal and Faiz.

23 Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim Sialkoti: outstanding theologian and teacher of the Holy Quran, Hadith and Islamic history and tradition.

24 Altaf Gauhar: now editor of the London monthly magazine *South and Third World Quartely*. Also, secretary-general of Third World Foundation.

25 Farida Khanum: popular ghazal singer and a great devotee of Sufi and Faiz.

26 In the late 1970s, Faiz published a volume of verse translations of lqbal's Persian poetry.

27 Athar Ali: Pakistani journalist and broadcaster who has been with the BBC External Services for nearly two decades.

28 Saleem Shahid: well-known Pakistani broadcaster and television presenter. He recently retired from BBC's Asian Television Programme unit in Birmingham which he joined when it started. Lives in London and Birmingham.

29 Zia Mohyeddin: famous Pakistan stage and screen actor and television producer who now does a weekly programme on

British television from Birmingham for Third World viewers. Married to the talented classical dancer from Pakistan, Naheed Siddiqui.

30 Hafiz Hoshiarpuri: perhaps one of the greatest of modern Urdu poets in the classical mould.

31 Razi Tirmizi: Urdu poet and broadcaster from Lahore. The poem in question is, unfortunately, somewhat unprintable, but an orally transmitted classic nevertheless.

32 Taj Multani: popular Punjabi kafi singer.

33 Khwaja Ghulam Farid: famous Saraiki mystic poet whose kafis are sung throughout Punjab and Sind.

34 Najm Husain Syed: Punjabi scholar who maintains that foreign incursions into Punjabi should be resisted.

35 *Viewpoint*: progressive English weekly magazine from Lahore, edited by Mazhar Ali Khan.

36 Abdullah Malik: Famous progressive writer and journalist from Lahore.

37 I.A. Rahman: distinguished Pakistani journalist. Now with *Viewpoint*.

38 Syed Wajid Ali: scion of one of Punjab's oldest Syed families. Gentleman of leisure and letters.

39 'Raise your head from the dust, raise it now, my precious son'.

40 'Nowhere, but nowhere, is there sign of the blood that was shed'.

Chapter Twenty Seven

Faiz on his Boyhood and Youth

Khalid Hassan

Our poets have always complained of the indifference suffered at the hands of their contemporaries, in fact, this has been a perennial theme in our poetry. As far as I am concerned, it is the other way round. I have had such kindness and love showered on me by friends, acquaintances and, even virtual strangers that I often feel that I do not deserve it. The little I have done, does not measure up to what I have received. I should have done more to make myself worthy of what people have given to me so willingly.

And this feeling of inadequacy is not something which came to me in my later years. Even as a child, I felt the same way. When I was a small boy in school, for some reason that I could not understand, my classmates seemed to have decided that I was their leader. I must confess that I have never had, what are called, qualities of leadership. In school, to become lionized as I was, one should either have been a 'tough guy' or have outshone the others in scholarship. I was all right as a student. I could even play a few games, but I was never the sort of distinguished student of whom note is taken.

When I think of my childhood, I see a house full of women, a crowd of them, actually. We were three brothers. My younger brother Inayat and my elder brother, Tufail, used to spend their time playing in total defiance of orders

to the contrary from the ladies' brigade. I alone had fallen into their formidable hands.

This was both a blessing and a loss. These ladies indoctrinated me into spending a frightfully straight life. Then, as now, I have found myself congenitally incapable of uttering a single obscenity or making a rude gesture. On the other hand, I feel that I was denied the playful moments associated with childhood. I remember myself watching from a distance the boys in the street flying kites, or playing marbles or spinning tops. I did not find the courage to join them, because it was all said to be perfectly frivolous.

My teachers were always kind to me. I don't know what happens today, but in our school, boys used to be regularly punished. The teachers of my time were executioners in the old tradition. As for myself, not only was I never even touched by any of them, but I was always somehow made the class monitor. At times, I used to be assigned the unhappy job of punishing the guilty ones. 'Slap this one, slap that one.' This to me was a most arduous task, though I had found a way round it. I would gently touch the offender on the cheek or tug at his ear, in pursuance of my instructions. Occasionally, I would get caught by the teacher who would shout: 'What do you think you are doing? Slap him hard.'

So, these essentially are the two deep impressions from my childhood. One, that I denied myself the small playful pleasures which characterize a normal childhood, and two, that I received limitless love from my friends, classmates and teachers. In this, I have been singularly fortunate.

In the morning, I used to go with my father to the mosque for prayers. I would wake up when the *azan* was sounded. We would spend an hour or two in the mosque

and after the prayers were over, we would stay back to hear Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim Sialkoti speak about the Quran and its meaning. He was a renowned scholar of his times. My father would then take me for a walk and by the time we got home, it was time to go to school. At night, my father would have me write letters for him. He had some difficulty writing by the time, so I was his secretary, I would also read the newspaper to him. Now that I look back, I realize that it was then that I became fond of reading and writing.

Another memory comes back to me. There was a shop next to our house, where one could hire books to take home for reading. It used to cost us two paise to borrow a book. The man who ran the shop was, for some reason, addressed as 'bara bhai.' His shop was a treasure house of Urdu literature. The books one was supposed to be reading in class six or seven, are now extinct. Books such as *Talism-I Hoshruba*, *Fasana-i-Azad* and the novels of Abdul Halim Sharar. I seem to have gone through all of them at that age. Then I moved on to poetry. I read Dagh, Mir and Ghalib, although, I must confess, that Ghalib was a little beyond me, not that I comprehended the others fully. However, their poetry left a profound impact on me. That was when, I think, I got interested in it.

One of the *munshis* who used to work in my father's office, once got angry about something I had done and informed me promptly that he was going to report my doings to my father, namely, that I read novels instead of my school books. This really terrified me. I begged him not to do so, but there was no pity in his heart for this boy gone astray. I was presently summoned by my father who said, 'I am told you read novels.' I shook my head in affirmation of the charge. 'If you must read novels, then read English novels. Urdu novels can be a lot of trash. The cuty library in

the Sialkot fort has plenty of what you should be reading,' he said without admonition.

So, I began to read English novels, Dickens, Hardy and God knows what else. Like poetry, I did not understand half the time what I was reading, but reading I was. For one thing, it improved my English. When I was in the tenth class, I would often catch my teachers making mistakes in language. Off and on, I would point them out, and though I was never punished, once my English teacher said to me, 'If you know more than I do, then why don't you take my place instead of coming to my class?'

In those days, I sometimes used to have a strange experience, it would seem to me that the sky had suddenly changed colour, objects had moved away into infinity and the colour of the sun had turned henna. My surroundings would appear to me like a giant screen on which everything was like a painted image. I have had the same strange experience in later years, but not for some time now.

There used to be *mushairas*, generally in an old *haveli* in front of our house. They were all arranged by Pandit Raj Narain Arman. Another gentleman, Munshi Sirajuddin, who used to be Mir Munshi to the Maharaja of Kashmir and a friend of Allama Iqbal, used to preside over these gatherings. I began writing poetry in the last year of school. It was more of rhyming than poetry. I was even asked to read at one or two *mushairas*. Once, Munshi Sirajuddin said to me, 'Young fellow, I know that you work very hard on your poetry, but spend your time on your studies. Your mind still lacks the maturity that poetry requires. Right now, it is a waste of time.' I stopped writing poetry.

When I joined Murray College, Sialkot, I met Professor Yusuf Salim Chishti who used to teach Urdu. He also wrote commentaries on Iqbal later. He was fond of

holding *mushairas* and he would often ask me to compose a ghazal on the basis of a stray line he had chosen form one of the known poets. That was when I found that my rhyming was now getting an appreciative audience. He said to me once, 'You should spend more time doing this. Who knows, one of these days, you may become a poet'. This advice was, of course, totally contrary to that rendered by Munshi Sirajuddin.

Then I went to Government College, Lahore, where I met Prof. A.S. Bokhari 'Pitras.' Dr. M.D. Taseer was at the time teaching at the Islamia College. Some time later, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum came to the Government College. I also got to know people like Imtiaz Ali Taj, Charagh Hassn Hasrat, Hafiz Jullandri and Akhtar Shirani. In those days, the relationship between teachers and students was more in the nature of a personal friendship. I may not have learnt much in college, but I learnt a great deal from these wonderful men. Whenever I would leave one of them, I would feel that I was walking away with something precious.

There is so much that I learnt from my friends. I would first read to them, whatever I had written and only after they had given it their approval, would I recite it as a mushaira. Any verse I did not particularly like myself or a friend thought little of, I would just cross out. By the time, I was doing my M.A., I had begun to write poetry regularly.

Because of my friend Khwaja Khurshid Anwar, I got interested in music. Khurshid was originally a revolutionary and part of the Bhagat Singh group. He was even sentenced, but was later reprieved. So, from revolution, he turned to music. Days, I would spent in college and evenings, at the house of his father, Khwaja Ferozuddin, where the great masters of the day would come and perform. That is where I first heard Ustad Tawwakul

Hussain Khan, Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan, Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan and Ustad Chottey Ghulam Ali Khan. Rafiq Ghaznavi, my friend and a contemporary of these great musicians, I also met at that time. He was at the Law College, but I don't think he ever attended a class. I would often find myself either in Khurshid's or Rafiq's room in the evenings and that is where I really got to know about serious music.

When my father died, I found that there was literally nothing the family had been left with. For many years afterwards, we went through difficult times, but even those I enjoyed. I learnt a lot. My friendships deepened and my circle of friends, though small, stayed together. I recall two friends form Quetta, Ehtashamuddin and Sheikh Ahmed Hassan, also Dr Hamiduddin. Many were the evenings that we spent together, a great deal else happened during those years of youth, the sort of things which happen in youth.

In the summer holidays, I either used to go with Khwaja Khurshid Anwar, or my brother, Tufail, to Srinagar. I had a sister living in Lyallpur, which is where I met Bari Alig and his group. My elder sister was in Dharamsala. I always felt struck by the sheer beauty of that hilly landscape. I have always felt more attracted by people than by the beauty of nature. I used to feel that there was also a beauty to the streets and roads of the cities I knew, no less moving than the splendour of mountains and valleys. You needed to have a certain kind of eye or vision to see it, though.

I remember that when we lived in Masti Gate, Lahore, I was always conscious of the strange beauty of our house in one of the low-lying streets. There was an open drain that ran in front of it and a small back garden. Then there were larger gardens around the area. I remember moonlit nights with their shadows and silver patches that

would hide much of the drabness one saw during the day. Some of my poems date back to those moments spent alone at night looking at that strange and magical transformation.

During my M.A. days, I was not always regular in my classes. If I felt like going, I would go, otherwise, I would stay away. Books, not part of the required reading, I would devour, so I never really obtained much distinctions in examinations. However, I knew that I knew a bit more than those who habitually stood first or second. This, my teachers knew. Sometimes, Prof. Dickinson or Prof. Harish Chander Katapalia, when not in the mood to lecture, would ask me to take their place. Prof. Bokhari, however, was very proper and would never do that. Prof. Dickinson used to teach us ninetieth century English prose, a subject he was not really interested in. Once he asked me to prepare a couple of lectures for him as he asked a few others. 'References where you are not sure of them,' he added, 'you should check with me.' So, in a way, I began to teach quite early in life.

In those days, it never actually once occurred to me that I would eventually become a poet. And nothing could have been farther from my mind than politics. Aware, thought I was and even influenced intellectually by the great movements of the day, such as the Congress agitation, the Khilafat, and Bhagat Singh's revolutionary and youthful upsurge, personally, I was not involved in any of them.

At one time, I wanted to become a great cricketer. I was very fond of cricket as a boy, even played a bit of it. Then I wanted to become a critic or a research scholar. However, I became neither, but, instead, moved to Amritsar to the M.A.O. College as a lecturer.

I suppose the happiest period of my life was spent in Amritsar. I enjoyed teaching and my friendships with my students. I met them even outside the college and I think, I learnt a great deal from them.

Friendships, formed during those years, I have maintained to this day. It was also at Amritsar that I seriously began to write poetry. Again, it was in that city that I became politically conscious, largely due to the friends I had mad there – Mahmood-uz-Zafar, Dr. Rashid Jahan, and later, Dr. Taseer. I had entered a new world. I began to work in the trade union movement, became involved in a league for civil liberties and joined the Progressive Writers' Movement. Never before had I felt so much at peace with myself and my environment.

I was very much part of the great controversies that developed around the Progressive Writers' Movement. I also became editor to the new Urdu literary magazine *Adb-i-Latif*. At the time, there were two groups among writers: those who believed in literature for the sake of literature and those who maintained that literature had a higher social purpose. Their debates were fiery and I was never far from the scene of action.

When radio came to the subcontinent, many of my friends went over to join the new medium. Friends like Syed Rashid Ahmend and Somnath Chib. Some years later, they both became, in succession, station directors at Lahore. I was a frequent visitor to the Lahore station, along with Dr. Taseer, Charag Hasan Hasrat, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum and Pandit Hari Chand Akhtar. In those days, radio programmers were not planned by the program producers, as much as by people like us. We would think up plays, features, interviews, even short stories. I remember writing quite a few myself.

When Rashid Moved to Delhi, I began to travel to that city frequently. Some of the friends from those days were: Israrul Haq Majaz, Ali Sardar Jaffrey, Jan Nisar Akhtar, Mueen Ahsan Jazbi and Makhdoom Mohyuddin. Those were hectic days but also days of leisure and a listless, kind of pleasure... (unfinished)

From a conversation with Mirza Azfar-ul-Hassan.
Translated from Urdu by Khalid Hasan

Chapter Twenty Eight

Faiz: A Summing Up

Khalid Hassan

Faiz died on 20 November 1984 in Lahore, a city he loved and during his periods of self-exile, pined for if the end had to come, then it was apt that it should have come in Lahore and not on the nameless byways of an unknown land, to quote a snatch from one of his poems.

How does one sum up a man who was larger than life? How does one assess a poet whose greatness was established over forty years ago, whose fame was to spread far beyond the land of his birth and whose work was to be translated in so many languages of the world?

In a country where one authoritarian government has made way for another since its independence in 1947, Faiz was to become a symbol of revolt and dissidence. His poetry, as much as his life, came to represent the longing of the people for the freedom which had come their way so briefly and then been cynically taken away.

To the forces of the left and to those who sought to build a just and exploitation free society, Faiz became a source of great ideological power. His voice always rang high and clear and during the grave like silence of martial law rule, his words remained a beacon of light that could not be extinguished. With him has gone the luminosity of hope. Today, as one looks around in that vast and unfortunate country of 85 millions, one fails to find a single man who could so courageously and with so much power give a voice to the voiceless. In the 1950s he wrote from

prison: 'What if they have snatched away the pen and the tablet from my hands, for have I not dipped my fingers in the blood of my heart.'

Faiz was a Marxist, but what differentiated him from this often joyless and doctrinaire crowd was his profound humanism, steeped as it was in the rich tradition of the subcontinent's culture, literature and spiritual continuum. His poetry is a celebration of life and an affirmation of the law of change. He was a man singularly devoid of prejudice. He fought bigotry, not with bigotry, but with tolerance.

In literary terms, Faiz was in the direct classical tradition of Ghalib and Iqbal and takes his place in that distinguished pantheon, an equal among equals with a style and presence distinctly his own.

His greatness lay in his ability to have written of contemporary issues and the human predicament in an idiom which always retained the high sobriety of classicism. He wrote within the great literary tradition of Urdu poetry. His diction, his imagery and his symbols remained unmistakably traditional, but unlike others who tried the same formula, Faiz managed to produce poetry which could be directly and immediately related to the concerns of today.

In the hands of lesser practitioners, writing within the alistere confines of tradition has resulted in soulless repetition, the invocation of a kind of literary mantra which has lost its power and its applicability. More bad verse has been written in the traditional mode than one would have thought possible. With Faiz the sleeping gods once again came to life. The word regained its vitality and its power. This will remain the greatest testimony to his genius.

Rejecting the art for art's sake approach very early in life, he identified himself with the aspirations of the

common people. The miracle of his genius lay in his ability to communicate not only with them, but with the so called 'more sophisticated' sections of society as well. His verse retained its purity and lyricism and never failed to move. He is among that handful of whom it can be said they never wrote bad or indifferent poetry. His seven volumes of verse stand witness to that.[1]

No greater statement of Faiz's humanism can be cited than his powerful poem on the 1965 war, that senseless conflict beween India and Pakistan which destroyed thousands of young lives, settled nothing and sowed a harvest of hate and suspicion which is still being reaped twenty years later.

Called 'The Soldier's Elegy', the poem is written in the lilting cadences of Hindi. A free verse translation might manage to convey some of the power and pathos of this disturbing piece of verse.[2]

Arise from the dust, my son wake up
T he black night is over us
Bedecked in soft blue shawls
I have made your bed
Consecrating it with the pearls of my tears
So many pearls
That the sky is luminous with their splendour
The splendour of your name.
Arise from the dust, my son, awake
The morning gold is over the rooftops
But black as night is my backyard
We have been waiting
Your comely bride
Your handsome brothers
Wake up
What was your kingdom

Is now a wasteland
And on the thrones of iniquity
Sit mighty tyrants
Why are you sleeping so quietly
On the dusty earth
Wake up, son
My obstinate son
Wake up.

It is evidence of Faiz's universalism that he wrote this poem at a time when the basest and most primitive jingoism seemed to have taken hold of the people of the subcontinent. As a matter of fact, Faiz was attacked at the time by poets and intellectuals turned super-patriots overnight for his silence. It was even said that his sympathies squarely lay with, what was then and has since been described as the Indo-Soviet lobby, an international political pressure group of whose existence both Moscow and New Delhi are unaware.

The Faiz elegy, written soon after the 17-day conflict ended to reveal the carnage and destruction of so much life and goodwill, is a classic in the sense that it takes no geographical, ideological or political sides. His elegy is for all those young soldiers who fell in the war any war. Only someone with Faiz's humanism and detachment could have produced this poem at the height of India and Pakistan's 'scoundrel time'.

It is no wonder, therefore, that all his life, Faiz remained under attack from small-minded communalists and men blinded by religious or nationalistic bigotry. He never retaliated. His tolerance for taking personal abuse was almost saintlike.

One of the leading lights of the Progressive Writers' Movement which transformed the literary scene in India in

the early 1930s, Faiz remained steadfast to his literary and political principles. In a society where success is often commensurate with the ability to compromise and kneel in supplication to the rising sun, Faiz chose to follow the lonely path of dissent. And while the high and the mighty and those who ebb and flow by the moon will be swept away into the bin of history, Faiz and his legacy will live and continue to inspire the generations that lie unborn in the womb of time.

Faiz was born on 13 February 1911 in Sialkot, West Punjab, the second son of Sultan Mohammad Khan, who, according to one account, 'ran away as a child from the prospect of a village shepherd's life and educated himself to become a senior functionary at the court in Kabul'.

Faiz studied at the famous Murray College, Sialkot, that marvellous institution run by the Church of Scotland, where the poet Iqbal also received his early education. He moved to the Government College, Lahore, where he secured degrees in English literature and Arabic. By the time he had finished in 1934, his name had begun to be recognized by the literary establishment in Lahore.

In 1935, Faiz took his first job a lecturership in English at the Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College in Amritsar. He lived in that city for the next seven years. He formed some of the most abiding friendships of his life during those years. It was in Amritsar that he first read the Communist Manifesto, of which experience he said later: 'I read the Manifesto once and the way ahead was illumined.'

He married a young English girl, Alys George, in 1941 and a year later joined the war publicity department of the then Government of India. He stayed long enough to become a lieutenant colonel, No one could have been made less for the army than Faiz, but he felt that in the struggle against Nazism and Fascism, if a uniform had to be worn

then a uniform should be worn. Perhaps it was for his work during' the war that he was later given the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.).

In early 1947, the late Mian Iftikharuddin set up the Progressive Papers Ltd. in Lahore and Faiz was asked to become the first editor of the English daily, *The Pakistan Times*. He also came to head the editorial boards of the *Times'* sister publications, the Urdu daily *Imroze* and the Urdu literary and political weekly, *Lail-o-Nihar*.

One hopes that soon an anthology of Faiz's powerful editorials and articles written for the *Times* against the communal madness of the riots and carnage of 1947 will be brought out. Faiz was a stylist and had he chosen to write in English, he would have been assured of the same eminence that was to be his in Urdu. The Progressive Papers were the first organized effort to put Pakistan on a progressive and secular path, an effort that was brutally crushed in 1958 when Field Marshal Ayub Khan took over the papers and placed them under the so called National Press Trust, a black and ignoble institution that no government has found it expedient to abolish, despite professions to that effect, either prior to assuming office or immediately after assuming it.

In 1951, Faiz was arrested for his complicity in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. This was in Liaqat Ali Khan's time. The case was almost farcical since the 'conspiracy' was discovered months after it had been given up as impractical. A number of senior army officers, including General Akbar Khan and his wife Nasim (dubbed by the press the Lady Macbeth of the episode), were also arrested and sentenced.

Faiz spent four years in prison where he produced two collections: *Dast-i-Saba* (The Wind Writes) and *Zindan*

Nama (Prison Journal), apart from a collection of letters *Saleebain Merey Darechey Main* (Crucifixes in my Window).

Faiz was released in 1955 and returned to the Progressive Papers Ltd. When Pakistan's first martial law regime came to power, having overthrown the constitutional government headed by Malik Feroz Khan Noon, in October 1958, Faiz was abroad. On his return home in December, he was placed under 'preventive detention' to prevent him from doing what, it was not explained. This continued for several months. No chargesheet was provided as the newly promulgated martial law 'regulations' gave the military authorities enough powers to commit as many irregularities as they wished. The Ayub Khan tradition has continued, gives or takes a few intervening years.

It was after his release from 'preventive detention' and with free journalism no more than a memory, that Faiz turned to the cinema. He wrote the script and screenplay for the award winning film *Jago Huva Savera* (Awake, the Morning is Here). Directed by A. J. Kardar, the film told the story of a poor community struggling against social and political oppression. It was during these years that Faiz wrote several songs and lyrics for films, most of them made by his friends like Hameed Akhtar and Shamim Ashraf Malik.

The last film produced by Faiz again with A. J. Kardar was never released. When the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by General Zia-ul-Haq in July 1977, the film was in the final stages of completion. Its financing had come from the official National Film Development Corporation. Since Faiz was both the producer and the writer, it was only to be imagined that the new rulers of Pakistan would go over the project with a high resolution magnifying glass. They found the film 'anti-

military' and `anti-Islam'. A high powered martial law tearn held an inquiry and it is said that Faiz was subjected to a fairly harsh though not in a physical sense interrogation. Perhaps, one of these days when there is an order in Pakistan which does not feel threatened by Faiz and his ideas, his last excursion into the cinema will be completed and released.

In 1962 Faiz was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, an honour that has not come the way of any other Pakistani. However, the establishment in Pakistan made this the basis of attacking Faiz for his communism and 'adherence to other than nationalist ideals.' These years were difficult ones for Faiz. Disheartened by the situation at home, he spent two of them abroad, mostly in London, where he all but settled down. However, he was one of those men who could not long stay away from his country and his people.

In 1964, he returned, but not to Lahore, his city of lights, but to Karachi, where he became principal of a school run in the poorest and most derelict part of that sprawling city. He lived there until 1972.

When the putrid regime of General Yahya Khan finally made way for the first elected government in Pakistan's history in December 1971, Faiz was asked to organize and head the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Two years later, he returned to Lahore as Consultant on Culture to the Government of Pakistan. Besides organizing a music research cell and heading a commission on cultural planning, Faiz was asked to represent the country in a number of international conferences. After the military takeover of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, Faiz resigned.

Another period of exile, a longer one this time, was to begin for the poet in early 1978. He was asked to take up the chief editorship of the Afro-Asian Writers' magazine

Lotus, then being published from Beirut. He stayed there until the Israeli attack of June 1982. He only left the city at the behest of Yassir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who had become a close personal friend and admirer of the poet. Some of the poems written during the time are included in this collection. They remain some of the most moving pieces in his body of work.

Perhaps there is no better way of ending this account than by reproducing a translation of one of Faiz's greatest poems *Dedication* which contains, in essence, all the major themes of his life and work).

To this day
And
To the anguish of today,
The anguish of today which is indignant at life's resplendent garden.
A forest of yellow leaves,
A forest of yellowing leaves, which is my homeland;
A society of anguish which is my homeland.
To the withered life of the clerks,
To their moth-eaten hearts and tongues;
To the postmen,
To the tonga-wallahs,
To the 'railwaymen,
To the hungry stalwarts of factories;
To the world's emperor, owner of all that is, God's representative on earth,

The farmer;
Whose cattle have been driven away by the tyrants,
Whose daughter has been abducted by the dacoits,
Part of whose tiny farm has been filched by the patwari,

And the rest taken over by the government by way of revenue;

Whose turban is trampled into tatters by ruffians.
To the sorrow-laden mothers
Whose infants moan and cry through the night
In dumb inconsolable agony,
In the tired arms of their wakeful mothers.

To those pretty damsels, whose flower-like eyes
Have dimmed and withered,
Gazing into fruitless expectancy at curtains and windows.

To those wives whose limbs are aweary,
Decorating the loveless and hypocritical beds of their husbands.

To those windows,
To the little lanes and mohallas of the city,
With whose despoiled dust the moon often performs ablutions,
Under whose shadows mourns the henna of the damsels' veils,
The tinkle of their bangles, the perfume of their ringlets,
And the smell of the yearning bosoms
burning in their own sweat.

To the students,
Who, carrying with them the thirst for knowledge,
Knocked at the doors of the pompous torch-bearers of learning;

To those innocents who travelled with their tiny lamps,
but did not return home.

Aching for more light of learning and found
That what was being doled out at the destination
Was utter darkness and the shadows of endless nights.

To those prisoners,
In whose bosoms the glowing jewels of tomorrow's hope,
Have been fanned into guiding stars,
Through the painful blasts of the prison-house.

To the ambassadors of the days to come
Who lay their lives, scattering, flower-like,
The fragrance of their message.[3]

References

1. *Naqsh-i-Faryadi, Dast-i-Saba, Zindan Nama, Dast-i-Tah-i-Sang Sar-i-Wadi-i-Sina, Sham-i-Shehr-i-Yaran, Merey Dil Merey Musafir, Nusqsha-hai-Wafa*, a limited collected edition of his works published in London, and later in Lahore in 1983.
2. Translated by Khalid Hasan.
3. Translated by Dr Imdad Hussain [courtesy: weekly *Viewpoint* Lahore]

Chapter Twenty Nine

Faiz and Indo-Pakistani Music

Peter Manuel

Faiz's poetry may mean different things to different people. To the poet or the connoisseur of Urdu verse, its sophistication and expressiveness render his ghazals models of modern Urdu poetry; to one who shares Faiz's passionate commitment to human welfare and dignity, his verse is an inspiration to action and perseverance. Yet it may be said that the largest part of Faiz's audience is composed of people who do not actively read his (or anyone else's) poetry, and indeed, many of these people do not read Urdu or may be illiterate. I am referring, of course, to the millions of casual or dedicated music-lovers who have become acquainted with and grown fond of Faiz's verse through the medium of ghazal-singing, and whose lives have been in some measure brightened by the numerous musical settings of his ghazals. Even for many of those who do avidly read Faiz, it often becomes difficult to dissociate his ghazals like 'Gulon men rang bhare' from their popular musical renderings.

Ghazals, of course, are intended ideally not to be read silently, but to be heard, whether in public recitation or in a musical setting; and with the advent of the mass media, through musical settings of his verse Faiz has been able to enjoy wider popularity and recognition in his own lifetime than has any Urdu poet before him. Thus, Faiz's poetic contribution to the field of Indo-Pakistani music is one of the most important aspects of his achievements.

It has often been pointed out, both by Western aestheticians like Suzanne Langer and by ghazal singers like Anil Biswas, that not all great poetry is suitable for singing, and, conversely, mediocre poetry may, when sung, acquire the expressiveness of the greatest poetry (albeit in a musical rather than strictly lyrical realm). Begum Akhtar's unforgettable setting of Shakil Badayuni's 'Ae mohabbat tere anjam pe' is one example of the sublime poignancy that rather ordinary verse can attain in the course of being sung. Similarly, ghazal singers often find that much of the poetry of the great masters is too obscure, philosophical, or aurally difficult to lend itself well to singing as well as the verse of somewhat lesser poets like Simab Akbarabadi. Faiz's ghazals, however, fall in that happy category of verse that not only is finely crafted but at the same time makes excellent song texts. To a large extent, this is because of the fact that Faiz's output was small, compared to that of, for example, Dagh, and it is of relatively even quality, ranging, one might say, from good to peerless. Another reason for the musical potential of his poetry is its inherent musicality and sonority, such that even long compounds like 'garmi-e-shauq-e-nazara' somehow lend themselves easily to incorporation in the musical fabric.

Musical renditions of Faiz's ghazals have been recorded commercially by most of the top ghazal singers of the last forty years, including Barkat Ali Khan, Begum Akhtar, Farida Khanum, and Mehdi Hasan. The ghazals set to music generally present only a partial picture of Faiz's output, since singers invariably choose the romantic ghazals rather than those which have a social message. Aside from a few *qatas*, most of Faiz's romantic verse is, of course, in ghazal form, as most of his socio-political verse is in the more free nazm form which allows more formal experimentation and sustained development of a single

concept. However, singers have, for several reasons, tended to avoid his social ghazals like *Loh-o-Qalam*. Romantic ghazals are naturally more appropriate for the genteel and urbane light-classical ghazal-song, not to mention the sentimental film ghazal. Moreover, a commercial recording of a revolutionary ghazal might be subject to state suppression. Most importantly, singers themselves tend to be conservative or apolitical, dependent as they are on aristocratic or bourgeois patronage, and often looking back nostalgically at an imagined feudal golden age.

The time, perhaps, will come when ghazal-singers and qawwals will set Faiz's more overtly political work to music, perhaps they are already doing so. At any rate, we can be certain that if a 'new song' movement should ever take root in the sub-continent the way it has in Latin America, Faiz's ghazals neglected by film singers will become theme songs of the movement.

In the wake of Faiz's death, we may expect a burst of interest in Faiz's ghazals, and perhaps several new recordings. Fortunately, Faiz was well recognized in his own lifetime, and there are many fine musical settings of his verse, including one album (Odeon LKDA-20006) dedicated entirely to his poetry, and containing recordings of his ghazals by top singers as well as of Faiz himself reciting in his raspy yet warm voice.

For collectors, the following is a partial list of recordings of Faiz's ghazals:

Ali Bakhsh Zahoor: 'Himmat-e-ilteja nahin baqi'
Barkat Ali: 'Donon lahan teri mohabbat men'
Farida Khanum: 'Sab qatl hoke tere'
Begum Akhtar: 'Sham-e-firaq ab na puchh'
Mehdi Hasan: 'Gulon men rang bhare'
Shaukat Ali: 'Garmi-e-shauq-e-nazara'

(all on EMI Odeon LKDA-20006)

Mehdi Hasan: 'Gulon men rang bhare'
'Ae kuchh abr kuchh sharab ae'
(EMI LKDA-20009)

Begum Akhtar: 'Chasme maigoon zara'
'Sham-e-firaq ab na puchh'
(EMI LKDA-20003)

Farida Khanum: 'Sham-e-firaq ab na puchh'.

Chapter Thirty

Faiz Ahmed Faiz in Canada

Jamil Rashid

Preliminary Remarks

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to speak on this occasion, Sham-e-Faiz, to pay tribute to Faiz Ahmed Faiz, in our humble way. It is a great privilege. The topic is 'Faiz in Canada.' I am happy to recollect some happy memories of those days when we were fortunate to have Faiz Sahib amongst us in Canada.

Let me start by quoting Mazhar Ali Khan, a close and life long friend of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who wrote on November 29, 1984.

> 'Many years will have to pass before literary historians and serious critics are able to define with any authority Faiz Ahmed Faiz place in the pantheons of world's greatest poets and writers. They will need to assess his vast contribution to URDU POETRY and PROSE, compare him to his contemporaries or the giants who went before him, analyze the thought content of his writings. While biographers will describe and judge his activities in various fields.'

Let me say that I am still in that state of mind, I am trying to learn more about him. Faiz Sahib left us, six years now; my memory is still fresh about his visits to Canada.

Faiz came to Canada in December 1978 for the first time. Later, paid two more visits, in October 1980 and May-

June 1981. It was during these visits, travelling between Beirut, London and Toronto, that he wrote his two well known poems of 'exile.' These poems are the voices of all Pakistanis settled abroad, but especially those who find themselves in the same melancholy as Faiz found himself, away from his land of childhood and intellectual growth, more later on these two poems.

۱۔ مرے دل، مرے مسافر
۲۔ آ گئے مرے ملنے والے

First, a little a background to Faiz's visit to Canada. After Zia's takeover in July, 1977 the 'consciously' progressive intellectual community came under great pressure. Faiz was involved in writing, and actively participating towards creating cultural patterns, and places where young generation would come on its own, meeting challenges of social change. Faiz was in no mood to go abroad. But friends advised him that he should travel, and go overseas for fresh breathing space, especially when atmosphere in the country was becoming poisonous during the trial and later the execution of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

A number of invitations were sent to him, including the one from Toronto. I was involved in this planning. The late Professor Aziz Ahmed, a well known writer from Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, who had settled in Canada, and was teaching at the University of Toronto, showed his keenness towards extending invitation to Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

I was in Kingston, and so did not know exactly what transpired, but to my anger I heard, that pressure from Pakistani military junta persuaded these people to withdraw their invitation. But, then some other friends hurriedly arranged his visit, and Faiz Sahib arrived in Toronto, more or less as scheduled. He stayed mostly in

Toronto. We had one lovely evening with him, in Toronto, when S.M. Kaleem, the enchanting Gazal King, recited Kalam-e-Faiz. He had extensive discussion with Professor Aziz Ahmed, especially on politics and poetry.

During this visit, another one was planned by friends in the academic circle. In October 1980 Faiz Sahib returned, and we were fortunate and happy to see Alys Faiz with him. He was much more relaxed and in a jovial mood. Faiz Sahib had always been a family person. (This will be described much better by Salima Hashmi, later on). Alys Faiz made a great difference on this visit. Victor Kiernan, the British historian and the person who has translated Faiz's work, and compiled his ideas in a UNESCO publication, has this to say:

> Alys, 'his best friend and guardian angel and with two daughters he is devoted to, has brought into his life a security that nothing else could have given it.'

In October 1980, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Alys Faiz toured Ontario quite extensively, including a visit to Kingston for a couple of days. In Kingston, in a very relaxed and homely atmosphere he recited the two poems of 'exile' in complete form, which were later, published in a book in February 1981. I would like you hear these two poems in his own voice:

(play tape cassette)

مرے دل، مرے مسافر

For me, the essence of these poems is that poems are that Faiz speaks on behalf of the 'muted' Pakistanis who are forced to leave their young country, because of socio-economic and political compulsions. Many of us wander around North American cites. Looking for familiar faces

and places, remembering our land and people looking for those friends who could communicate intelligently.

> I have recorded these observations somewhere else: What many of us fighting against, as conscious settlers in foreign lands is the fear of mutation. Immigrants, settlers, new citizens of the overseas lands, all have a continuous struggle to be defined as equal human beings.

Faiz found himself among those who had become 'strangers' to themselves in strange environment, the other poem:

آ گئے میرے ملنے والے...

Which he wrote in Beirut, but once again echoed the melancholic environment of Canada, with all the affluence but no 'human' familiarity' among those friends who were the citizens of the same land. Faiz is not looking for 'good' old days, but changing environment has taken away 'human' touch which could be avoided if we could learn to adapt with new material conditions.

While in Kingston, he also gave a talk at the local university: 'The Voices from the Third World-Poetry and Politics' This brought him closer to many overseas students in the city. Many of them had come from Africa, Asia and Latin America. They found a friend in Faiz. Alys Faiz gave a seminar and talked very informally with men and women on 'Women in the Third World'. Once again, people from all walks of life found, in Alys, the voice of friendship and understanding, a person of peace and harmony. She has kept this tradition through active participation and writing, in the finest legacy of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

After their return to Beirut, they wrote affectionate letters about their visit to Canada and especially Kingston

remained a special place of happy memories for them. From Kingston, they left for other places, but more specifically to Toronto, where Faiz Sahib spoke of the plight of Beirut, he has written very touchy poems about Palestinians. Many Palestinians in exile visited him. Then, there was a memorable *mushaira* in Toronto and other activities which endeared the people of Ontario. On this visit, I must mention with sadness that news from home were distressing, military authoritarianism was at its peak, after the execution of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. There were people who loved to come to the *mushaira* and hear Faiz Sahib, but tried to separate his political message when in fact, Faiz never separated 'art' and active life for him, poetry and politics were part of his life. To quote Kiernan again, on Faiz:

> To be a nationalist writer is easy, to be a national writer is hard. As a poet whom his countrymen are proud of, and at the same time a target of frequent attacks. Faiz's situation has been a contradictory one, reflecting the contradictory moods of a nation still as Iqbal, said of the entire East, in search of its soul.

The second visit led to the third one in May-June 1981 when the Canadian learned societies officially invited Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Alys Faiz to tour Canadian Universities. They travelled from East to West, Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Ottawa, Saskatoon and Vancouver, among the major cities, and some smaller towns including Kingston. Both of them were much more relaxed meeting people from all walks of life rather than talking to 'monolithically' academics in the university seminars and lectures. Faiz Sahib was never a man of 'ivory' tower. Alys has always remained attached to the

causes of children under stress and women who are struggling hard to find a decent 'human' space for dignified life. Faiz was a happy partner in her endeavours. Let me conclude by quoting an observation made by Kiernan:

> 'He is indeed one of those many 'cultural Muslims' in many lands today who think of themselves not as religious in a specific sense but as heirs to a long experiment of civilization, and to a great ethical tradition which always did homage to truth and justice and to the upright man prepared to uphold them at all hazards, Pakistan's chance of growing into a nation both truly modern and genuinely founded on an Islamic 'cultural Muslims' then on anything else.'

Finally, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, for myself and many other friends, has left a legacy of living in a world of an enlightened humanistic socialism, Humanism which covers people from all walks of life.

Love for humanity has no transactions except the fruits of a better and more peaceful world. This is what Faiz has given us to ponder. The best tribute we can pay to Faiz in Canada is to stretch our open arms towards friendship and fostering harmony among all those who have settled here.

Long Live Faiz
Long Live His Message of Love and Peace.

Chapter Thirty One

Tormented by a Restless Breeze

Navtej Sarna

I do not believe that I am qualified to write on Faiz Ahmed Faiz. But the memory of a long ago Moscow afternoon tempts me. As a young diplomat existing somewhere at the edge of the embassy, I could not believe the phone call from the multilingual and multi-talented Amina Ahuja, who happened to the Ambassador's wife. 'Come with me,' she said, 'we will go and meet Faiz *sahib*.'

I could only ascribe the immense honour to an incident when, listening to some *ghazals* of Faiz at a colleague's house, she had noticed that I knew some lines by heart.

Soon I found myself being whisked away in unaccustomed elegance to the edge of the city, then through birch forests, to the immaculate green lawns of a hospital meant for those who mattered. A committed Marxist, Third World internationalist, poet of the oppressed and winner of the Lenin Peace Prize, Faiz was entitled to be there.

A walk down a long corridor and we were in the warm presence of the master, recuperating in his room with wife Alys at his bedside. I forget the exact conversation but, in a few minutes, Faiz had gotten up from the bed and we all walked out into the lawns, perhaps so that he could light his ever-present cigarette. And there he proceeded to recite some of his new poems.

I did not fully realise then how weak and tired he was, ailing between his days in Beirut and his final return to Lahore. A boyish smile still lit up his deeply lined face, a denial of the sadness in his eyes. In a year and a half he would be dead. Today true the carelessness of youth that makes us think that life and people are forever...else even in a non-digital age, there should have been a camera or, more important, a tape recorder.

The memory settles back into the comfortable crevice created by 25 years and I listen once again to an invaluable recording in his own voice, his deep, resonant, rhythmic, rasping smoker's voice as he recited his poems for Dr. Shaukat Haroon, believed to have been his Muse for several of them, under the shade of a huge banyan tree at her residence in Karachi.

The famous *Gulon mein rang bhare, baad-e-naubahar chale/chale bhi aao ki gulshan ka karobar chale* (Bring the flowers to bloom, let the spring breeze blow/Come, my love, and rouse the garden from its sleep), sung to perfection by Mehdi Hassan, is believed to have been written for Shaukat Haroon.

Loves and passions

As of course the eulogy that he wrote when he locked himself in a hotel room in the immediate grief of her death: *Chand nikley kisi janib teri zebai ka/rung badle kisi surat shab-e-tanhai ka* (Let the moon of your beauty rise from some quarter and change the mood somehow of this lonely evening).

There were other loves and passions too as he revealed in an unusual interview with Amrita Pritam, including an unexpressed love at the age of 18. Faiz let that experience flow into the poems in his first collection:

Naqsh-e-Fayadi, including the immensely evocative verses in which the poet addresses his rival:

> Tu ney dekhi hai vo peshani, vo rukhsar, vo hont
> Zindagi jin ke tasawwur mein luta di ham ne
> Tujh pe utthi hain vo khoi hui sahir ankhen
> Tujh ko malum hal kyun umr ganwa di ham ne.
>
> (You, who have known that cheek, those lips, that brow. Under whose spell I fleeted life away. You, whom the dreamy magic of those eyes has touched, can tell where my years ran astray.)

But his real love was Alys, an English girl who came to India in the 1930s, already a member of the Communist party. In Faiz she found a soul mate. Theirs was to be a friendship and partnership of four decades, through thick and thin, through Faiz's imprisonment and self-exile, as Faiz told Amrita Pritam: 'Alys is not just my wife, but my friend as well. This has made life bearable for me. There is intense pain in love, but friendship is peace.'

Faiz's words in his own voice can cast a strange spell can create a mood which reaches deep into the soul, leave behind visions and images, and a smouldering fire. That is why I have kept this recording at hand for years, much like Faiz himself never slept without *Diwan-e-Ghalib* by his bedside.

'No one can say he has read enough of Ghalib,' said Faiz. He adapted Ghalib's belief of expanding the particular to the general, to feel the sense of oneness with humanity expressed in Ghalib's couplet: *Qatray main dajla dikhain na day, our jaz mein kul Khel larkon ka huwa, deeda-e-beena na huwa.* (Unless the sea within thedrop, the whole within the

part/Appear, you play like children; you still lack the seeing eye.)

Romance and politics, sensuous lyricism and fiery passion, mingle inextricably in Faiz's poetry. 'The true subject of poetry is loss of the beloved,' he wrote but, in his case, the 'beloved' could mean a lover, country, freedom, even revolution. He had grown up in the intellectual ferment after World War I, the wave of romanticism, the hopes of the October revolution, the emergence of a working class, the stirrings of nationalism. He had seen economic hardship, sleeping often on an empty stomach.

It was inevitable that social realism changed his poetic vision from the purely romantic and he became a founding member of the Progressive Writers' Association. This transformation is best encapsulated by the famous *Mujhse pehli si mohabbat mere mehboob na mang* (Love, do not ask for that love again) in which he goes on to say 'our world knows other torments than of love, and other happiness than a fond embrace.'

Incidentally, after listening to Noor Jehan sing this *ghazal*, Faiz immediately gifted it to her and thereafter would not even recite it, saying that it belonged to her.

Sympathy with oppressed

After the Partition of the sub-continent, after what he called the 'pockmarked light' of Independence, after the 'the dawn stung by the night', he became editor of *Pakistan Times* in Lahore but was soon imprisoned in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case.

Prison walls could not contain the fire in his heart and mind: 'If ink and pen are snatched from me, shall I who have dipped my finger in my heart's blood complain or if they seal my tongue, when I have made a mouth of every round link of my chain?'

The five years in prison, besides adding glamour to his persona, produced some of his best poetry, in praise of freedom, in sympathy with the oppressed of the world, as he felt the restless breeze go past his prison and wondered what havoc had been wrought in the garden beyond.

> (Chaman mein ghaarat-e-gulchin se jaane kya guzri
> Qafas se aaj saba be qaraar guzri hai).

And for readers of this column, Faiz's writing method would be of interest. Here it is in his own words:

> 'I do not really know how one writes. Sometimes while reading a book, a phrase or a sentence or an image or a rhyme sticks in the mind, and ultimately, ends up in a poem. At times, while listening to music, a certain note or a certain rhythmic pattern leaves a deep impression. A *ghazal* first requires the emergence of a rhyming scheme in one's consciousness. One builds on it. For a *nazm*, one has to think. A line comes first and then you think of the pattern of the poem. It is like an artisan at work. It has to be built. You have to get it into focus. The basic image must be in sharp focus. You have to match things. The music has to be right. No false notes.'

And there were none.

Chapter Thirty Two

Revisiting Faiz

Rakhshanda Jalil

Politics and history are interwoven, but not commensurate, said Lord Acton (1834-1902) in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor at Cambridge in 1895, so also politics and prose, and, in the worst of times, politics and poetry. There can be no better example of this axiom in the twentieth century than the writings of the revolutionary Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz. While most readers in South Asia are familiar with his poetry, few would have read his writings in English. Faiz wrote, prolifically and compellingly, on the events that shaped the destiny of the sub-continent.

Coming Back Home gives the English reader a sampling of the poet's prose writings a selection of newspaper editorials, articles and interviews compiled by Sheema Majeed. The title, however, is a bit of a mystery, for many contributions arranged in no particular order pre-date his exile and years away from Pakistan. The very first entry is an editorial from *The Pakistan Times* entitled 'What Price Liberty?' written in April 1948 long before his jail term and the spells away from home. No attempt is made to explain the title neither in the publisher's blurb on the jacket, nor in the introduction by Khalid Hasan. Hasan's memoir, coming nearly at the end of the book, however, does talk of the years after 1982 when Faiz returned to live in Pakistan.

The small matter of the title aside, the book is a compact little treasure trove, for it illustrates better than

many bigger tomes would, the depth and range of Faiz's concerns and interests. Not only is the English prose, much like Faiz's Urdu poetry, hard-hitting and passionate, but it is concerned deeply and ardently with the past and the present. Like his poetry it looks at the future with hope and not just a little foreboding. Unlike the poetry however and I say this with some trepidation, for Faiz is revered by legions of admirers across the globe, and I would count myself among the faithful as far as his poetry is concerned the prose is occasionally long-winded and just a trifle ponderous. Where the Urdu poetry enchants and beckons, spilling out a kaleidoscope of images and metaphors, calling out to the readers to find common cause against injustice, exploitation and a host of social and political issues, the prose is occasionally weighed down by its own rhetoric. Where the poetry lilts and soars with effortless ease, conjuring up the most evocative and lyrical images to record or condemn the most grisly events in the history of the subcontinent, the prose harks back to an older style of writing that was self-consciously pedantic, even arcane sometimes. Having said that, I suppose the comparison itself between prose and poetry is unfair, and the two, even from the same pen, are by their very nature as dissimilar as apples and oranges.

As the Editor of *The Pakistan Times*, the English language left-leaning newspaper from Lahore, he wrote on an array of issues from 1947 until his arrest in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case in 1951. Of this period, perhaps the most moving is the editorial of 23rd March 1949, titled 'Progress of a Dream'. Declaring the Partition as a way 'to end the vertical division that separated the two major peoples of the sub-continent... by a horizontal division so that the divided halves could each develop an internal harmony that the undivided whole lacked' he says,

The dream is as yet unfulfilled. The division has come but neither half is as yet completely at peace, either with itself or with its neighbour.'

Faiz reserves his strongest words of criticism for those 'selfish packs of men' who 'mock at the nobility of freedom.' He is chillingly blunt when he writes:

> There are no halfway houses between liberty and thralldom. The public have to choose and decide whether they are going to permit this and similar inroads on their hard-won freedom [referring to the infamous Public Safety Act that gave unbridled powers to the State] or whether they are content to live in daily fear for their freedom and honour. The weapon of the Safety Act that they have placed into the hands of their Government is a dangerous weapon and is not a fit thing for children or sadists to play with. It should either be taken back or the people entrusted with it should be taught its proper use. It must be realized that a weapon like this cannot be used properly either by men who are cursed with the vindictiveness of an elephant and the ferocity of a wolf or by men who lack the guts of a rat and the courage of a sparrow.'

For all his scathing editorials on the goings on in the government and his hauntingly evocative ghazals on the blood bath in East Pakistan by the West Pakistani armed forces, Faiz was a nationalist. He remained one no matter where he lived in Lahore, London, or Beirut. He may not have written any rousing taranas or anthems but his epochal poem on the 1965 war, *Uttho ab maati se uttho, jago mere lal* ('Rise from the earth, wake up, my son'), is a

tribute to the soldier who lays down his life fighting for the country. For all his *musafirat*, voyaging to distant lands, Faiz remained deeply, quintessentially attached to his country that he called *laila-e-watan* (the beloved that is the land of his birth) in one of his poems. Each one of the editorials, essays, interviews and memoirs in this collection bear that out.

At first reading I found it hard to reconcile the glowing tribute to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, captioned To God we Return, written upon the Quaid-e-Azam's death in September 1948 with the poet who wrote *Yeh daagh daagh ujala, yeh shab-gazida sehar, yeh woh seher to nahi tha intezar jiska*? Was it the same man who lamented in the poem *Subhe-Azadi* (Freedom's Dawn) the 'stained light and the night-bitten dawn' that greeted those who had yearned for freedom? For a man like Faiz to write such an unqualified obituary of a political leader whom he calls 'friend and counsellor, the guide and confidante, the comrade and leader all combined into one' seems fanciful.

There is plenty here that is not quite in consonance with the liberal, progressive ideology that runs like a shaft of translucent light all through his poetry. In real life, however, while Faiz had his sympathies with the poor and downtrodden, he was clearly never one of them. Despite his left leanings and the Lenin Peace Prize awarded to him by the Soviet Union in 1962, he did not belong to the Communist Party. It might, for this reason, be instructive, to read this anthology in the context in which it was written. For one can see here the tightrope Faiz walks between ideology and good taste, between art and propaganda, between his role as an editor and as a free thinker. For it is only then that we can truly appreciate what lies hidden between the covers of this slim book.

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Neruda, Faiz and an Indian Song

Jawed Naqvi

Can fighting forces like the Taliban and their cousins in faith who have neither music nor poetry to spur them to victory ever win a war? Can a few rigid religious prescriptions that circumscribe a worldview, really create a better world?

The last great Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had everything going for him till he began to heed his bigoted religious advisors and reportedly banished music from his presence, an art he had a great love for as a young full-blooded prince. Though his religious piety may not have had a direct bearing on the fall of the Mughal empire, his zealotry did play a hand in the tragic denouncement.

In the great tragedy of Karbala, where an epic battle was fought between the forces of truth and injustice, a 19th century poet from Lucknow discovered the romance of music. Mir Anees describes Imaam Hussain's call to his rivals to tone down the music so they could hear him clearly.

Sukhan e hag ki taraf kaano ko masroof karo
Shor baajon ka munasib ho to mauqoof

The Muharram processions in Awadh are incomplete without the fanfare of music and poetry, like the kind Mir Anees offered to his adoring audiences. They were riveted to his description of the epic battle that turned

the tide of Islamic history. Whether it is martial music or romantic poetry that encapsulates the partisan's keen spirit varies according to the prevalent culture both usually go together.

Recently, writer Arundhati Roy presented a book of Pablo Neruda's poems to a group of Maoists rebels she visited in the forests of Chhattisgarh. She also gave them a recording of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Hum Dekhenge* sung by the legendary Iqbal Bano. In the essay she wrote about her journey, she wondered whether sharing music constituted 'offering intellectual and material support' to the banned organisation, an act of national betrayal according to India's home ministry.

The jury is still out on what the government of the day is going to do about her outing. Recently the home ministry issued a directive warning intellectuals and activists against supporting the CPI (Maoist). The warning clearly signalled that the government was getting jittery about the fierce, open and combative debate her essay, and the unease surrounding Operation Green Hunt, the overt war purportedly against Maoist rebels, seems to have sparked off.

There has been some speculation over whether the government will follow up its directives withsome arrests of writers, activists and journalists. A friend of hers sent me the following message:

> When de Gaulle was asked why he was not taking a sterner view on Sartre, and his writings on the Algerian question: On n'emprisonne pas Voltaire', he said. 'You don't imprison Voltaire!' The question here is not of course whether or not Arundhati Roy is Voltaire. The question is can you really jail

Voltaire? Can you imprison poetry? This is what Neruda says:

While briefly chilled, I want to tell
without vengeance and what's more with joy
how from my bed in Buenos Aires
the police took me to prison.
It was late, we had just arrived from Chile,
and without saying anything to us
they plundered my friend's papers,
they offended the house in which I slept,
My wife vented her disdain
but there were orders to be executed
and in a moving car we roved about
the tyrannous black night.
They it was not Peron, it was another,
a new tyrant for Argentina
and by his orders doors opened,
bolt after bolt was unlocked
in order to swallow me, the patios passed,
forty bars and the infirmary,
but still they took me up into a cell,
the most impenetrable and hidden:
only there did they feel protected
from the exhalations of my poetry.

Perhaps instead of threatening writers and poets, the Indian authorities should pay more attention to them. They will find more truth in poetry than in the corporate culture they want to foist on a furious people.

Neruda wrote his poem on India after a visit to the subcontinent in the 1950s. He says in his memoirs there was bad chemistry between him and Nehru. But what he

had to say then about the country is probably valid even today:

> India. I didn't love your tattered clothes,
> Your dismantled community of rags.
> For years I walked with eyes that wanted
> To scale the promontories of contempt,
> Amid cities like green wax,
> Amid talismans, pagodas
> Whose bloody pastry sowed terrible spines.
> I saw the miserable wretch heaped atop the suffering of his brother,
> Streets like rivers of anguish,
> Tiny villages crushed
> Between the flowers' thick fingernails,
> And I went in the throngs, a sentry
> Of time, separating blackened scars, tribulations of slaves....

Another poem by Neruda whose photocopies must have been distributed, possibly also translated across the sprawling Dandakaranya forests, the Maoist stronghold, pertains to the quality of media the tribals are getting. Sample this Neruda vintage:

> I wanted to read it in newspapers,
> in La Prensa (which is so informative),
> yet Mr Gainza Paz does not know
> if Argentinean prisons are being filled.
> He is the champion of our 'free' press
> but if communist journals are closed
> this grandee acts dumb without reporting it,
> his feet ache and he has eye trouble,
> and if the workers go to jail

everybody knows it except Gainza,
everybody resorts to newspapers,
but 'large' journals do not publish
anything about these stupid tales:
La Prensa is preoccupied
with the last divorce taking place
with motion picture asses in Hollywood
and while press syndicates cloister themselves
La Prensa and La Nacion are metaphysical.
Oh what silence from the fat press
when the people are beaten,
but if one of Batista's jackals is assassinated in Cuba
the presses of our poor America
confess and print their sensational stories,
they lift their hands to their temples,
it is then that they know and publish,
the Sip, Sop, Sep meets
to save the virgins in trouble
and running to their purse in New York
they hurriedly solicit
the constant inducement of money
for the 'liberty' they patronise.

So perhaps what those who are resisting the depredations of awry development need, is the transformative power of poetry and music to make their point.

Faiz: Essayist, Critic and Champion of Human Rights

Estelle Dryland

At a memorial lecture given by Faiz in New Delhi to commemorate the death of Sayyid Sajjid Zaheer, Faiz's address exhibited not only a superior knowledge of Western literature but also his expertise as an essayist. His chosen topic was the examination of cultural interplay between Eastern and Western literatures. The following paraphrase,[1] an admix of Faiz's wry humour, cynicism and intellectual brilliance, is undertaken to demonstrate his literary versatility. The poet suggests that 'the most incisive and significant cultural encounters were intra-Asian rather than East-West'.[2] The effect of these encounters in multi-lingual and multinational sense became manifest in myth, legend, story, song, thought and belief. Faiz posited the East-West phenomenon in more recent times, and upon examining the aetiology of the concept, attributed the 'East is East and West is West [sic] racket' to Kipling.[3]

Having first proposed the notion that Alexander's foray into Asian lands resulted in the first mass-contact between Eastern and Western peoples, Faiz proceeded to theorise on the legendary figure of Alexander. He saw him primarily as the proto-type of all subsequent heroes of medieval romance, and secondly, as a '...common protagonist of both Eastern and Western national and religious causes'.[4]

Tenth century Persian poet Firdausi (ca.934-1020) depicted Alexander in the role of step-brother to Darius,

while later Persian poets converted him to Islam and despatched him to Mecca. 'The Western romancers... made him their protagonist against the Turkish infidels and his dragon-slaying exploit was enough to confuse him with the equally legendary St. George'.[5]

The era of Crusades saw the East-West concept gradually assuming a more refined image. This phenomenon, initially romantic and benign, featured a ruddy-faced, golden-haired Eastern character which, with the advent of the Elizabethan era, was replaced by the black Moor. The Norman conquest, expansion of the Ottoman Empire under Suleiman, and the total eclipse of the Byzantine civilisation 'all combined to enfocus the English literary mind on the Turk, with obsessive racial and reigious hostility'.[6]

The Elizabethans deemed the Turk to be villainous, venting their hostility on grounds of religion and colour. Faiz scrutinised Marlowe's *Tamerlaine* who according to its author was 'a deliverer of the Christian powers'.[7] Faiz speculated wryly that Marlowe may not have recognised Tamerlaine as being very much Muslim. He quoted the ninth century writer, Father Abcrus, who lamented over the proclivity of fair-complexioned Christian dandies for the ardent study of Arabic at the expense of their own language. 'Perhaps one in a thousand may be found who can write a decent letter to a brother'.

> What endured for a much longer time was a basic romantic pattern with a virtuous Christian knight or king as hero overcoming innumerable enemies, winning among other victories an oriental princess or two who embrace Christianity, an orgiastic oriental court with a bloodthirsty and cruel king and

> a horde of Muslim pagans who were almost always shown as idol-worshippers.[8]

Faiz then drew the hearer's attention to a predominance of eastern characters in Western literature, with the reverse situation finding little evidence of Western characters apart from the solitary appearance of Alexander.

'It was nearly three centuries later that the Muslim Indian Writer, having read the Christian version of the Crusades, and Particularly Walter Scott, tried to get his own back by reversing the roles of the heroes of romance'.[9] Now it was the Christian Princess who absconded with the Turk, Moor or Muslim prince and it was she who embraced Islam.

Faiz suggested that by the end of the seventeenth century, Post-Renaissance humanist and scientific values resulting from East-West cross-cultural encounters were rapidly replacing the narrowness of old theological rigidity. English writers and readers found parallels between their own culture and that of the East. Racial and religious prejudice went into decline, taking with it the brutal Turk and the black Moor.

The Eastern scene took on a new character in 'a glittering medley of Persian, Arab, Indian and Far-Eastern lands and characters, romantic, mysterious, highly sophisticated and ravishingly colourful'.[10]

> 'With the publication of Thomas Moore's *Lala Rukh*, of the Story of Sohrab, together with a resume of other tales from Firdausi's *Shah Nameh* produced around the same time by an obscure James Atkinson of [the] East India Company, followed by Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and other translations by the first noted orientalist, Sir William Jones, a number of

eminent English poets Southey, Collins, Arnold turned to Persian odes and pastorals for inspiration'.[11]

Faiz suggests that in spite of mutually bitter and antagonistic posturing, that the near East and near West were to find common ground in early theocratic and later feudalistic societies. The literary hero now donned the mantle of prince or warrior, becoming endowed with qualities such as physical prowess, moral rectitude, along with fidelity to both friend and faith. 'By the mid-18th century, however, the West... was fast being transformed into a rising mercantile and later industrial power, while the East was littered with the remains of static feudal civilisations'.[12]

Western civilisation lent itself to class differences, with corresponding adjustments to norms of societal behaviour. Faiz purports that these developing patterns had no counterpart in the East. 'Inevitably the two drifted steadily apart until Kipling's East became East and West became West'.[13]

Due to its geographical remoteness prior to the Elizabethan era, India's literary role was limited to myth and legend. In Faiz's opinion, Dryden's Aurangzeb may have been the first full-length English play based upon an Indian theme, to have truthfully portrayed typical Indian customs despite its customary depiction of intrigue, blood-letting, and garbled historical data.

The expansion of the British East India Company into political and military hegemony brought a subsequent literary interaction as writers peregrinated between East and West. Anglo-Indian themes excited the imagination of English readers and writers. 'Walter Scott's Surgeon's Daughter, Tayler's *Confessions of a Thug* and Tipu Sultan first set the trend'.[14]

Faiz credits the British writer of the period with considerable compassion for the exploited Indian and with an equally intense disapproval of the gold-digging *Nabobs*'.[15] Thus, Dr. Johnson describers(s) Clive as 'a man who acquired his fortune by such crimes that his consciousness of them compelled him to cut his own throat.[16]

Faiz quotes Ruskin, at the same time qualifying that the latter was an exception, as saying that the advent of the 1857 Great War of Independence and its aftermath, in fact every act of mutiny or terrorism against the administration could be attributed to the imperialist 'material desire to live on the loot of India'.[17]

In accordance with a changed socio-political, postrevolutionary climate, the literary roles of both India and the Indian became similarly transformed.

> The romance of India was over. It was now the land of 'jungles, tigers, cobras, cholera and sepoys': 'the white man's grave'. And the lowly Indian once admired for his wisdom, honesty, and so forth, now became a nigger, a pig, a coward and a cheat.[18]

As the white smoker of the hookah and composer of Urdu poetry moved into the role of the Sahib, so, according to Faiz, did the Indian of Kipling's patronage become 'the noble savage' a la Othello, the *Pathan*[19] or the childlike primitive, the Bheel, or the faithful servant and sepoy.[20]

Faiz in his lecture, however, does not deny the merits of Imperialist hegemony. He makes reference to the unique Phenomenon of literary history initiated by the British East India Company's Fort William College. Established originally as a school of oriental learning in Calcutta in 1799, this subsequently expanded institution not only provided educational opportunities for native

students, but also provided language learning facilities for those associated with the Company.

Hindustani writers and scholars were subsequently to provide Fort William College with nearly fifty prose works comprising legends, romances and other forms of fictions, specifically to be utilised by foreigners with the aim of providing a basis for a genuine cross-cultural exercise.

> It is in the Delhi College, however, founded in 1825, that Urdu literature was really exposed to the English literary influence and the modern movement in our literature was born.[21]

The second half of the nineteenth century saw Indian prose and poetry adopt a westernised literary model. 'In poetry, the traditional ghazal form was supplemented by thematic poems on science, moral or social themes after Southey, Wordsworth or Tennyson'.[22] Faiz states that ready made models were found in Shakespeare, Johnson, Steele, Addison, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and Defoe. However, by the nineteen twenties these newly-found westernised Indian intellectuals embarked upon their own creative genre, possibly reflecting a thematic blend of both cultures.

Faiz concludes his address with reference to the likelihood of Pakistan's literary influences expanding to embrace other European literatures, particularly Russian, French and German. Here there are two interesting points to note, the first being the amount of Russian literature available in Pakistan, particularly in the northern areas of Peshawar and Islamabad. The second is that according to personal sources, only a very limited amount of English-language literature is published in Pakistan to-day.

Part 2

Faiz Ahmed Faiz is also noted for his role as literary critic. On 18 June, 1941, he was interviewed by Kashmiri dramatist *Agha*[23] Abd ul-Hamid on an All-India Radio broadcast from Lahore.[24] The topic under discussion was the renowned Indian writer, Prem Chand (Dhanpatrai Srivastava 1880-1936). It will be noted that Faiz was thirty years of age at the time. Possibly his opinion of the writer may have altered with maturity. Dhanpatrai Srivastava, who adopted the takhal'lus 'Prem Chand', was born in Lamhi, a small hamlet four miles from Banaras (now Varanasi).

'Prem Chand had a passion for Hindu-Muslim unity, and was, therefore, critical of the fanatically inclined, be they the Muslim mullahs or Brahmin priests'.[25] His political ideology does not emerge clearly, but it may be suggested that in his early days be was a follower of Gandhi, was an ardent nationalist, and later became impressed by the socialist system.

Prem Chand's greatness lies in the fact that he was the first writer of Indian fiction to closely examine the reality of Indian village life, the misery of women, the poor, and the Untouchables. Along with fellow progressives, he incorporated themes of social realism into his writing, but it was realism peculiar to his own 'idealist realist' perceptions. He found contemporary reality unbearable, and cherished visions of an ideal society based on equality and justice for all. He believed that literary works should contain aspects or beauty rather than bitterness, but at the same time should depict the values and norms of Indian society. It becomes evident that the two writers, Faiz and Prem Chand, shared to a degree a marriage of affinities. It may be suggested that Faiz's role in the following discussion was

dictated by the requirements of the critic to inject lively controversy into such a debate.

Faiz commences his criticism by remarking that some days earlier, Hamid had reviewed Prem Chand in *Majlis*, so fervently lauding the writer that by comparison Tolstoy and Dostoevsky appeared somewhat insignificant.

Faiz concedes that there are qualities to Prem Chand's credit, but these are not evident in the field of the novel. When questioned by Faiz as to whether he ranked Prem Chand equally with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Hamid replied in the negative.[26] Hamid qualified his response, however, by saying that in his opinion Prem Chand was a great short story writer. At the outset of his article, Hamid referred to writers Sarshar, Nazir Ahmad (1831-1912), Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926) and Rusva, remarking that not one of them could be called a first-rate novelist. Any excellent qualities were offset by the large flaws which could be detected in their works. Consequently, they were incapable of producing first-class novels. Suddenly, he wrote, from amongst the ranks of these second-rate writers appeared Prem Chand, an excellent story-teller and creator of a score of living characters.

Faiz suggests that Hamid's criticism is not merely an injustice it is cruel.[27] He challenged Hamid, declaring that if the latter, after reading Nazir Ahmad's novels, *Kalim Zahirdar Beg, Ibn ul Vaqt* and *Amrao Jan Ada,*[28] considered these to be not living characters, in what sense did Hamid consider the late Prem Chand's characters to be extraordinary by comparison?

Hamid admitted that his criticism of Nazir Ahmad was unjust and that in his heart he had great regard for one particular work of Ahmad entitled '*Mirat ul Aroos*'. He conceded that perhaps Nazir Ahmad did not, in fact, rate lower than Prem Chand, and as far as art was concerned, it

may be that Nazir Ahmad stood ahead of Prem Chand. Faiz then expressed the opinion that Hamid regarded Prem Chand's work as totally flawless and that prior to him there had been no writer of any distinction. Hamid insisted that this was not so, and that during the discussion he had hinted at Prem Chand's literary shortcomings. At this stage of the debate, Faiz attempted to inject some spirit into the discussion, gently provoking Hamid in his customary genial manner.

He asked how the debate was to proceed when Hamid agreed to every proposition. Hamid responded by questioning the poet's having reached this conclusion, adding that, in his opinion, of all short story writers Prem Chand alone had achieved excellence. He suggested that Faiz examine a characterisation, stating that none of the other short story writers could equal Prem Chand in this field. Faiz was prepared to admit that Prem Chand had a certain expertise when it came to characterisation, but overall he saw it as not successful.[29]

Prem Chand's male and female characters conformed to one particular model. For instance, Faiz argued, several of his novels and occasional short stories characterised a type of rich *zamin'dar* whose life-style is patterned along English lines.[30] In several of his novels and short stories the subjects are not positively drawn. There are several characters who display little individuality or appear lifeless.

Hamid granted that to some extent this was correct, but suggested that Prem Chand's interest lay in the field of the poor, and particularly in the rural poor, adding that the writer's artistry becomes evident in this type of characterisation.

There were, of course, the rich puppets but this did not detract from the artistic importance of Prem Chand.[31]

Faiz urged Hamid's agreeance that to a great extent. Prem Chand's characterisations were limited, in as much as the writer depicted only one social class. This, he claimed, cannot be called factual or realistic writing, realism being an all-embracing or comprehensive concept. The person in whose mind there is a holistic understanding of society is equipped to expound on social topics. Faiz was unable to attribute this facility to Prem Chand.

According to Faiz, not only did Prem Chand remain silent on the issue of the multi-faceted nature of life, he knowingly chose to overlook it. In no way could he be considered a writer of realism. Hamid expressed his disagreement with Faiz's dispraise, nominating one short story in which realism becomes apparent to reader. He agreed that many of the writer's stories fell into this limited category, but, notwithstanding considered Prem Chand to be a first-class story writer. Citing Jane Austen as representative of the world's few short story writers who limited their writing to class, Hamid remarked that whosoever chose, could deny her greatness. Both Mrs. Gaskell and Emily Bronte could be treated similarly.[32]

At this point of the debate, Faiz reproached Hamid for digressing, stating that the debate did not centre on the good and bad features of the novel. The topic was realism. He did not deny Jane Austen's greatness, but for the restriction of her writing to one limited and worthless class, judged her not to be a writer of realism no matter how detailed, sincere and relevant to that class her literary intentions. Any novelist who showed only one aspect of life may be termed a great writer of novels, but not a genuine titer of realism. Faiz then moved on to the question of Prem Chand's failure to address the less pleasant of life's issues.

In answer to Hamid's query as to the nature of these unpleasantnesses, Faiz declared the list to be long and not

all necessarily unpalatable, citing sex as the first theme for analysis. Prem Chand, he declared, evaded the subject at every opportunity. When depicting a man and woman as lovers, he clothed them in a purity, sanctity and spirituality which Faiz referred to as worthless and unwanted stuff.[33] The lovers were designed to meet early or untimely deaths, following reciprocally adolescent love affairs, lightly gilded with spirituality and idealism.

In reply to Hamid questioning the worth of this criticism, Faiz admitted that perhaps it could be deemed debatable from a moral perspective.

Technically, he believed that Prem Chand had no understanding of the relevance of the human body and its most basic desires. Conversely, the writer may have lacked the courage to confront them.

Prem Chand, according to Faiz, seemed unaware that the most important function of human lives following eating and drinking, was sex. Faiz cites the love of Sofia and Vine Singh in '*Chaugani Hasti*' (Polo Game). Despite their maturity, Prem Chand casts them in the role of pure and child-like lovers.

Hamid countered, expressing the view that love cannot be protected from its environment. The era and environment in which Prem Chand spent his lifetime bred a society which suffered from an inordinate degree of sexual modesty. People harboured the notion that to write about sexual matters was objectionable. Should Prem Chand be criticised for choosing not to provoke his readers for no rhyme or reason?[34]

Faiz declared that Prem Chand warranted criticism for this act of appeasement and compromise. He observed that the writer simply accepted some fundamentals of religion and society without giving them appropriate evaluation.

Some customs and practices were introduced into society through necessity. After a period of time the principle aim of changing conditions in society may die but society does not have the capacity to die. Prem Chand's characters become as worthless encumbrents, to be borne on his shoulders.

Faiz examined the role of women in Prem Chand's stories. In Prem Chand's view, his ideal woman was one who, rightly or wrongly, sacrificed her life for some principle or cause. The writer put considerable emphasis on sacrifice. Only after his heroine had abandoned life's pleasures and renounced the world did he see her as an object deserving of respect.

By contemporary standards, this renunciation is not viewed as a courageous sacrifice. In fact, Faiz denounced it as a cowardly act whereby the renunciate absolves herself of worldly responsibilities. Hamid defended the characterisation, stating that this was merely the outcome of a certain type of society.

He quoted Faiz as saying almost daily that one could not free oneself from the restraints of a restrictive society. Apart from this, Prem Chand seized every opportunity to demonstrate the Indian way of life in his stories and novels, and the defects implicit in the plementation of customs therein.

The most important element in Prem Chand's books was that despite being an urban critic, his interest lay more in the fundamental way of life of his characters. In one instance he wrote: 'Why are our customs not enduring and stable? To achieve this, the effect of social interaction is necessary. We are so thoughtless regarding our domestic lives, believing as we do that there is no necessity for preparation or education in this area.

It is accepted that a girl who plays dolls with her girlfriends is worthy of making a virginal home for her lord and master, at the same time putting a heavy yoke on the shoulders of the straying calf. Such social arrangements cannot be conducive to the enjoyment of life or domestic bliss.

Faiz indicated, in turn, that indeed Prem Chand criticized certain customs. The problem persisted nevertheless, due to the fact that he was a poor unfortunate, yet entirely noble man. Social criticism was not the work of the noble. If one sought a compromise in every aspect of society, or if the critic's opinion on every issue was non-progressive, then it was better that his/her crriticism should be totally ignored.

A revolutionary heart and mind was essential if one was to dispel the fundamental psyche, and, 'I reiterate that poor unfortunate Prem Chand was a totally gentle and polite man'.[35] Hamid retorted that it was incorrect to assume that Prem Chand lacked the temerity to describe the social psyche. Undoubtedly some of his early novels and stories may have appeared devotional, but in '*Goshah*', '*Afiyat*', '*Maidan Amal*' and '*Godam*', he drew a closely accurate picture of the Indian countryside.

His purpose in writing these works was to highlight both rural oppression and the subjection of the masses to insult and affliction in their efforts to gain a meagre handful of grain. Following the *Story of Freedom*, Prem Chand wrote of the farmers' and peasants' experiences only in language they could understand.

Faiz thanked Hamid for his reference to the language of the masses. He questioned the sudden necessity for Prem Chand to utilise the language of the peasants. Usually the writer had used it only when addressing *Hazoor* (Sir) as *Hajoor*, or *Mushkil* (difficult) as

Muskil. And, according to Faiz, a delightful feature was that in a speech attributed to one of Prem Chand's peasants, the first sentence was spoken in the language of the peasantry while the second was delivered in beautiful Lucknowi Urdu.

Faiz directed a further criticism at Prem Chand. He averred that on occasion the writer would overtly incorporate a sermon into his work, thereby imbuing the tale with art propaganda. Hamid retaliated by immediately citing several books containing sermons on a variety of issues. Tolstoy, he claimed, in his final years had written some short stories specifically for purposes of sermonising. Critics felt that the inclusion of sermons did not alter the worth of Tolstoy's literature. And then there was Maxim Gorky.

Faiz ventured that if a novel had artistic merit, then the inclusion of a sermon was of no consequence. However, if this was not the case, then not only was the literary worth of the novel eroded, the sermon itself was rendered ineffective. For instance, there was an abundance of advice offered in Persian literature. But history does not support the premise that of all the world's peoples, Iranis are the most virtuous.

Hamid asserted that not all the Prem Chand stories contained sermons, quoting one in 'particular, *The Road to Salvation*, which had attained reasonable success despite its sermon. Originally entitled *Salvation Road*,[36] it tells the story of Buddhu the shepherd and Jhingur the farmer. The latter was of higher social caste. In their attempts to outwit each other, each totally depleted his means of livelihood. Straitened circumstances brought them together, Buddhu of the lower cast supplying the food, and Jhingur of the higher caste preparing it for consumption in accordance with the dictates of social hierarchy.

While sharing a hookah, they briefly admitted to a hitherto unspoken awareness of their mutual misdeeds, i.e., Buddhu's burning of Jhingur's crops and the killing of Jhingur's sacred cow, for which heinous crime the innocent Buddhu was wrongfully charged by way of revenge. At the conclusion, the two reached an amicable compromise within a state of poverty, which freed them from the necessity of further rivalry.

Having heard Hamid's version of the story, Faiz was of the opinion that if this story was judged successful on its artistic merit, then it would be the one out of all of the Prem Chand stories which addressed the requirements of artistic merit. He commented that the greatest criticism of Prem Chand's work was still to come.

He proceeded to condemn Prem Chand's lack of ability to shape his novels, acknowledged the presence of a story-line but questioned the lack of balance and method.

Faiz saw no well-defined craftsmanship, no well-devised design or plot, as a consequence of which Prem Chand's novels appeared to be loose and lacking in structure. Hamid agreed to disagree, rounding off the interview by declaring that in the field of the novel Prem Chand would emerge as leader of the new writers.

Part 3

Faiz Ahmed Faiz did not restrict his activities solely to the Indian sub-continent. He won acclaim as a champion of International Human Rights, believing humanity to be a vast fellowship enmeshed in a common suffering. He shared this passion for universal well-being with both Prem Chand and Chilean friend Pablo Neruda.

Like Neruda Faiz had no separate vocabulary for his revolutionary passion and like Neruda again he never

thought that revolutionary passion was the sole matter of poetry.[37]

Faiz's most cherished value was humanism. He saw the pen as an instrument for social change, at the same time rejecting the theory that social change should transform poetry to its detriment.

His profoundly artistic temperament denied any political cause the right to stifle his poet's conscience. Neither did he restrict his message to language designed to exclude those outside of Indian Islam, nor did he aim for the purity of extra-Indian Islam. By humanising his politics Faiz avoided overt politicisation of his verse.

In 1978 he was offered the chief editorship of the Afro-Asian Writers' magazine, *Lotus*. He accepted, and proceeded to Beirut where, accompanied by his wife Alys, he spent the following four years in a state of self-exile.

Of the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 1982, Faiz wrote, 'I will never forget this sway of barbarism. Israeli soldiers and those who issue orders to them are criminals. They must be made responsible for their crimes'.[38] Faiz railed against U.S. support for Israel, claiming that it was an attempt to subdue the Muslim population. Regarding what he saw as U.S. propaganda agencies declaring American support for the right of the Afghan people to build their chosen society, Faiz stated:

> This is an example of hypocrisy. Washington extended its protection to the gangs of Afghan bandits because this suited its anti-Soviet policy.[39]

The poet had, however, immense faith in the Palestinian people and their indomitable spirit. In a memorable interview conducted by several eminent poets and writers on 11 February, 1983, the occasion of his seventy-second birthday, Faiz expressed his views on

several important issues.[40] On the topic of Lebanon, the poet opined that the Israelis would limit their aggression to South Lebanon. One reason for this was the prospect of world pressure being brought to bear, the other concerned the relationship of the Lebanese government with both the western powers and the Palestinians. Faiz believed that these factors would jointly limit Israeli aggression.

In reply to Safad Rameer's query regarding any immediate reason for the attack, Faiz recounted that on 6 June, 1982 the first day of the air bombardment, over a thousand lives were lost. The Israelis justified this by saying that many of their own men had been killed by land mines in the occupied area. Also, a shot had been fired in London by some unknown hand. For this reason they were taking punitive measures.[41] Faiz explained that prior to this attack an international cease-fire treaty was in force.

Because there were no attacks the following day, he surmised that the assault of the previous day was an isolated retaliatory response. P.L.O offices were targetted throughout the raid.[42] On June eighth, the Israeli army entered Lebanon, after which there were daily air-raids at two to three hourly intervals, persisting throughout both mornings and evenings. The aggressors, however, not only bombarded the P.L.O offices. They bombarded the city's inhabitants, for it was their government's practice to spread fear and terror.[43]

The Israeli demanded the P.L.O should lay down their arms, that the action might be concluded. The P.L.O replied that they would never surrender and would fight to the last breath. In South Lebanon, Palestinian peasants were confined to camps which, Faiz suggests, the Israelis lacked the courage to enter. As a consequence, the Israelis continuously bombarded these camps on all sides, in the

hope that the residents would either flee or be decimated, following which the oppressors would enter.

The Palestinians had opposed them for two weeks. Syria imposed a cease fire on the third day. Ambulances, schools, hospitals all were subject to Israeli bombardment.

The Palestinian cultural and welfare centre which housed the Palestinian leadership was also subject to this savage bombardment. Yassar Arafat especially was pursued from lane to lane and from one house to the next.

In answer to a question posed by Hasan Rizvi regarding the role played by other Islamic countries at this time, Faiz replied that they hadn't become involved as they could not meet with agreement on any resolution to the problem.[44] Iran could have given aid by virtue of its access via Syria, but none was forthcoming. Volunteers arrived from various countries from Pakistan and Bangladesh for instance. Some sacrificed their lives there. There was obvious worldwide public support, with the common people helping wherever possible. However, Faiz declared, there was nothing forthcoming at governmental level.[45] Regarding the Jordanian King's attitude towards the Palestinians, Faiz viewed it as at best expedient and handled with discretion. Palestinian leadership excelled inasmuch as it adapted readily and was flexible. Leaders functioned according to the current state of affairs. At one stage Palestine had suffered Jordanian oppression, then Syrian oppression. Both countries betrayed Palestine and its people, but relations continued, best described using the English Words, 'strategical' and 'tactical'.[46]

Despite having no homeland and no government, continued Faiz, the Palestinians have, by their actions, taught other weak and backward countries that an effort can be made to repel the powerful. Two examples were France in Algeria, and the Americans in Vietnam. Faiz

asserts that it is obvious that in any war the principle parties are human. As the Palestinians say 'Palestine is no longer a state, it is a state of mind'. As long as one Palestinian remains alive, Palestine will remain.[47]

Hasan Rizvi queried Pakistani writers' attitudes towards Palestine and Afghanistan, suggesting that although much had been written about the former, for the past few years there had been a tendency to keep silent on the Afghan issue.[48] Faiz responded by saying that he failed to understand this. The two issues differed somewhat. Afghanistan, he claimed, had a government or its equivalent, plus an opposition. Allies of both parties were involved, i.e., Russia and America. Both parties sought aid from their respective allies.

Ishaq Ahmed ventured that in Russia there was a school of thought which felt that a political settlement should be sought on the issue of Afghanistan.

Jeelani Kamran asked Faiz's views regarding the opinion of some that Russia's occupation of Afghanistan was merely a means of Russian imperialism extending its boundaries. Faiz explained that imperialism did not mean merely the conquering of a country.[49] It meant the usurping of that country's resources for the aggressors' own imperialist purposes. Imperialist countries not only occupied other countries, but utilised the livelihood of the occupied country, e.g., produce and (sic) other things, for their own purposes. In other words, exploited them.

Wherever there were socialist governments, for instance in Vietnam or Angola, instead of exploiting the people, they made efforts to supply aid. Sometimes this was achieved by means of internal revolution, but, Faiz declared, where a socialist government was installed, one didn't find this type of heroism. The Afghan situation was a little different, however. Referring to socialist regimes, Faiz

quoted America and Reagan as saying, 'We will end socialism. We will throw them into a dustbin of a street'.[50] America, Faiz emphasised, had travelled five thousand miles, sometimes taking a piece of Vietnam, sometimes Korea or Afghanistan.

He supported the relationship between Pakistanis and Afghans, stating that they shared both religious and kinship ties, and therefore it was only seemly that Pakistanis should be emotionally involved in the matter of Afghanistan. The Afghan people were the victims of not one, but two aggressors.

In reply to Ishaq Ahmed's query regarding Faiz's personal feelings about the Afghan masses, the poet made reference to his own family kinship ties with Afghanistan. He described Afghanistan as Asia's most backward country. Many of its inhabitants, throughout their entire lifetimes, had seen neither motorcar nor train. The net result of its having been under the domination of both tribal and royal systems was an illiterate, impoverished and backward country, a condition perpetuated by their leaders to ensure the fixed obedience of the uneducated masses. It was also designed to ensure that the people remained within the sway of *pirs* and *mullahs*.[51]

There are, Faiz continued, those who criticize the system and say it ought to be changed. Some acquired education from abroad, others went to Russia for military education. They believe that ultimately this should remedy the situation and that one day they will take over the country.

How will they cope with the masses conditioned to a tribal system? Faiz queried. This happened previously, when in the nineteen twenties, King Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan wanted to implement his terms. At that time, the Russian army could not come to his aid due to Russia's

own internal problems. If the revolution in the Soviet Union had occurred ten years earlier, and peace and order had been restored, Amanullah may have obtained aid from the Soviet Union and events may have been vastly different.[52]

Faiz Ahmed Faiz's concern for his fellow being becomes evident throughout this interview. His interest was not confined, however, to the Palestine-Afghanistan areas alone. By means of his verse, Faiz expressed his deep compassion for the victims of apartheid in Africa, for the widows and bereaved mothers of Russian soldiers, for the plight of revolutionaries worldwide whose aim was to better the lot of the masses. An attempt will be made in the following chapter to demonstptc the degree of Faiz's poetic adaptation to his affinity with universal suffering, along with the literary versatility he exercised in his attempt to keep alert, through repetition of his verse, his readers' and listeners' awareness of the plight of the oppressed of all nations.

References

1 Paraphrased from 'East and West: The Confrontation', by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 23 October, 1983, pp. 68-71.

2 *Ibid.*, p.69.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, p.70.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 This quote, reproduced in its entirety, encapsulates Faiz's broad literary knowledge, *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*, p.70.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 Usually a term reserved for the Moghul governors of the Hindo-Pak sub-continent, but in this case Faiz applies the term to those he calls 'high-handed functionaries of the East India Company'. *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, p.71.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Pushtu*-speaking people of North-West Frontier Province, now part of Pakistan.

20 *Ibid.*

21 The Delhi College was established in 1825 and closed 1857 post-mutiny. Among its students were three noted scholars of the reformist movement, i.e., the founders of the Deoband Academy (Nanatawi and Gangohi) and Imdadu'llah, 1817-1899. The curriculum comprised both western and oriental studies, namely English, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, English literature, mathematics, history, and geography. Medium of instruction was Urdu. Imam Baksh Sabhai, resident professor of Persian, took an active role in the 1857 revolt and was, along with his sons, duly shot by the British near Rajghat in September 1857. These details appear in the list of Muslim martyrs, Santimay Ray, *Freedom Movement and Indian Muslims*, p.123.

22 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *East and West*, p.71.

23 Respect title.

24 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, 'Prem Chand', *Mizan* (Urdu), pp.236-52.

25 Madan Gopal, *Munshi Premchand*, p.214.

26 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *op.cit*, p.237.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Amrao Jan Ada, a character who appears in a work by Rusva. A prostitute of the geisha variety, Amrao tutored in singing

and dancing, and was probably home-educated by a maulvi. She spoke excellent Urdu and was a minor poet in her own right. Kalim Zahirdar Beg was a character from a Nazir Ahmed novel, as was *Ibn ul-Vaqt*, ostensibly a critical view of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan. Information obtained during personal communication with Mrs. Mahmud All.

29 Faiz Ahmed Faiz, *op.cit.*, p.239.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, p.240.

33 *Ibid.*, p.241.

34 *Ibid.*, p.242.

35 *Ibid.*, p.245.

36 First published in 1924, under the title of *Mukti Marg* (Salvation Road) is considered to be one of Prem Chand's finest depictions of village life.

37 R.K. Das Gupta, 'Lips Touched with Fire', *Link*, 23 Dec. 1984, pp.32-33.

38 Faiz, 'Israeli Butchers will Stand Trial', *New Age*, 17.7.82.

39 *Ibid.*

40 'Faiz Interview', *Afkar* (Urdu), pp.121-34. Paraphrased.

41 This comment appears to have been linked to the assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London. Faiz suggested that there was no proof that this was initiated by the P.L.O., rather that it may have been orchestrated by the Israeli Intelligence Service. *Ibid.*

42 'Faiz Interview', *Afkar*, p.122.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*, p.123.

46 *Ibid.*, p.125.

47 *Ibid.*

48 It will be recalled that this was the era of political rule of General Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, during which many leftist writers, including Faiz, Fahmida Riaz, Ahmad Faraz, sought self-exile abroad.

49 'Faiz Interview', *Afkar*, p.126.

50 *Ibid.*, p.127. Perhaps there is a little lost in the Urdu-English translation here, as it appears in English in the body of the original Urdu text. Should 'of' be better replaced by 'in'?

51 *Ibid.*, p.127.

52 *Ibid.*

Chapter Thirty Five

The Most Grievious Absence

Ziyad Abdelfattah

It is painful, hard and grievious absence. That academician, that greatest Urdu poet, that incomparable and obstinate militant, unrelenting protector of the causes of liberation and of people, the man whose faith in the universality of the Revolution had led him to join in the Palestinian Revolution experience, he who refused to leave during the siege of Beirut, he who braved the world of the shells the fiery minded, quick-witted, who said, "Don't force me to leave Beirut! I would like to watch the blazing moment created by the fighters and the poor," that old man who lived among us memories of his revolutionary youth, and who looked happy like a child whose face brims over with joy, every time he heard that a new attack had been crushed at one of the fighting positions in Beirut; he whom the martyr Mouin Beseisso used to take with him from a place to another, protecting him with his chest and hiding him in the apple of his eyes in fear for him has left us and slipped off our fingers just as we need him and his great and live experience more than ever.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz has passed away, but he will remain constantly present among and within us. The ardent soul of the editor-in-chief of *Lotus*, the Afro-Asian writers' Association organ, will always show through *Lotus* pages, and flutter between its lines. After him, *Lotus* – that magazine he had enriched, will keep looking for the finest

and the most creative. We will try our best to keep to the level of his great and profound legacy.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz is no more. Yet the previous issue of the magazine includes an intellectual discussion between him and Ch. Aitmator. Can that bring us some comfort? We do not think so, for Faiz's absence from *Lotus*, in spite of his constant presence, will deprive our magazine of such rich debates, such treaures running form his lips, out of this pen.

Faiz is rich indeed. He is rich in the works he has left, one after the other, devoted to the causes of Man, wherever he way be. He is rich, for he lived his broad life with all his wealthy experience, when he did hot possess anything except the slender means he earned from his creations. We swear to you, as we swore with you and before you to the Martyr poet of the Palestinian Revolution, Mouin Besisso that we will walk on, guided by the glimmer of the candles you lit in a patch dark night.

To Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Mustafa Fersi

The announcement of your death has actually crushed us with grief at a moment when we were already at the peak of the tragedy provoked by the equally unexpected departure of our other brother, beloved poet of the Palestinian revolution and songster of the Arab masses Mouin Besseissou. We refused your death, oh great poet of Pakistan, and one of the pillars of our Afro-Asian Movement. Actually, we did not accept to submit to the matter of fact nor to the making of fate.

You Faiz, you looked like no one else, you were not a writer like the others. Your nature, your temperament, your way of thinking and expression yourself, all that met to melt all your good qualities into a single one Pride. You used to say that, or something like that when speaking about the work to which you had devoted your life and for the legitimacy of which you had struggled till the last minute of your life.

You used to qualify that work as follows: "Various confluents which have their sources in different places and which join in a single bed to form a unique river." That was, according to you, the Afro-Asian Writers Association, of which you were one of the main founders at Tachkent in 1958, with Sharaf Fashidov, Sofronov and several others. Some of them have deserved the eternal rest, some others are waiting but we shall always recall just their birth dates, for we know they vanish but do not die.

I want today to associate my voice to the unanimous voice of the progressive humanity represented by the writers of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other countries in the world. Your faith in the legitimacy of your cause makes me recall, Faiz, a poem written by a Tunisian poet, as great and as famous as you Abul Kacem Chabbi, in which he says:

> He whose breast is swollen
> With holy revelation
> Does not care about the stones the wicked throw at him
> I bear the light in my heart
> And in my whole being
> So, why should I fear
> Walking into darkness.

You leave us today, without warning, without introduction, faithful to your habit, you reduce the distances between the spirit and the speech to reach the essence of things; for you loathed ornaments.

Winner of the *Lenin Prize for Peace* in 1962, the Afro-Asian Writers' Union awarded you in 1976 *the Lotus Prize* for literature and for your seventieth birthday, fighting Palestine named you kight of the Revolution Shield for letters and Arts, because you were the friend of the Palestinian revolution and the friend of the Palestinian People, Honour to whom honour is due!

You were a poet during all your life, since your tender childhood you had been a genuine poetry chiseller, a master engraver in your collection *Tehesing* (fingers on the rock), a words inventor in Urdu which, under your pen, has risen to the level of the human soul throbbing with life, love, faithfulness to the home country and to men.

In 1972 the UNESCO published your complete works, and the following year, the collection containing your poems written during the national fight was published. In your works, we feel, like you, the weight of eternity, but we feel, at the same time, the tenderness and quietude of the romantic you have always been. Your poetry enriches our sentimental experience and gives it force and strength. Oh you, who knew how to keep, till the end, the brightness of the look and the music of the voice! Your voice, Faiz, is a whole poem, it is a murmur, an imploration, a prayer, and in the most difficult moments, as well as in the most complicated situations, you have always known how to keep your serenity, your balance and your calmness.

We are waiting, Faiz for the day of the victory and we shall defeat the evil forces. You loved life and your hands sowed the blessed seeds of kindness, we are your proselytes and we talk on your paces.

Be blessed, Faiz, and rest in peace. We bid you farewell, today, and tell you, see you soon, in the paradise of the just, for the eternity!

7.3. 1985
El Menzah. (Tunisia)

Chapter Thirty Seven

The Hawk Has Flown to Rest

Alex La Guma

My friend and brother, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, is no longer here. Perhaps his spirit still soars, wings outspread, over the hills of Kashmir, the plains of Asia, the deserts and wells of the Middle East, the dry bush of Africa where people and antelope today still search for the nourishment of mere water. Such was he, the hawk who flew the world, whose sharp eye saw every horizon.

So well do I remember him? A man of immaculate dress and refined taste. Whenever meeting in London we had to have a curry lunch at some restaurant where he was well-known and liked. Those curry lunches became practically a tradition. Later in other parts of the world we would inevitably get together joined by mutual friends.

A man of great sense of humour, he would recount his experiences, in prison for political reasons in his country of birth, as an officer in the army, as the editor of a major newspaper and every reminiscence with a gay chuckle and a smile on his seamed hawk's face.

I suppose, above all he was a poet, and therefore a sage. As a poet only, his people knew him well. I remember while we visiting some of his friends together in some Asian city, the young driver of our car shoved a music tape into the car player and out poured popular Asiatic music while a woman's voice sang. It was the words of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, his poetry set to music and rendered in the popular vein.

Around the dinner table or the drinks trolley he was

urged to recite, and after the silence of listening came the acclamation.

As a wise man he followed in the footsteps of his world renowned ancestors. The wisdom of the ancients were echoed in his words.

As a pubic figure, this wisdom and this poetic genius were not far away. He participated in many seminars, engaged in lecture tours, invited by educational institutions in East and West. He was present at the great world assemblies for peace in many places, such as those held regularly in Bulgaria for writers especially.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz's probable last pubic words were heard at the Seventh Conference of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association. His quiet voice told us all, the link between literature and social existence, the responsibility of the writer to denounce contemporary evils, to fight for goodness and justice and thus help to change the world, these truisms were not discovered by us, in October 1958.

The artist and writer of our times was called upon to salvage from the debris of his traditional past perverted and overlaid by the sediment of colonialist impositions, the living elements of his own identity. He had to adjust these continuities of the past with the truth of his own experience and the realities of our times. In this process he covered, on the one hand, ancient cultural links with his Asian and African neighbours, on the other hand, the community of suffering and humiliation, of struggle and liberation, brought the peoples of our two continents together in mind and spirit.

On cassette tapes or in the annals of the Afro-Asian writers' movement, or the struggle for world peace, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's words live on. The old hawk has circled the world and spanned the seas with his wings. Now he has gone from the skies, but only to rest.

Chapter Thirty Eight

To the Memory of Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Rimma Kazakova

Faiz,
You were a trumpet whose clear call
rang soundlessly deep in the hearts of men.
Not all your message was within my ken,
and yet the silence I shared with you then
occasioned no timidity at all!

O times of the tirade, the endless rant
born amid noise and lost without a trace!
Faiz, you were so near and dear to us,
that words or names became superfluous.
Even your silence was reverberant!

Thus the grass rises, slowly, silently,
In silence does the flower disclose its treasure;
the theme's so highly charged with love's mad fever
that feeling, infinite, beyond all measure,
is of itself words burning wordlessly.

This day is marked with tragedy, Faiz.
You fell in action on the field of battle.
The memory brings immeasurable pain:
I enjoy silence with you once again!
But now we must forever hold our peace...

Faiz,
As with one living, I'll discourse
 in mutual silence fraught with lofty fervour!
Often I'll find all that I would discover.
That silence will needed more than ever.
Each day of ours shall also then be yours.

Translation: Alex Miller

Chapter Thirty Nine

Farewell, Faiz...

Anatoly Sofronov

In November 1949, a delegation of soviet writers headed by Nikolai Tikhonov, flew to the town of Lahore in Pakistan at the invitation of Pakistani writers to take part in the Conference of Progressive Writers of Pakistan.

The journey was tiresome. On our way we had our first glimpse of Afghanistan. Our plane first landed in Kabul from where we started for Lahore by car. The land of Pakistan still breathed the horror of war – two years had hardly passed since the country became independent and hostilities were still rampant. We felt it all the time from the very moment we crossed the Pakistani border. We were four in the delegation – a fine Tajik poet Mirzo Tursun-zaseh and the gifted Uzbek novelist Aibek, besides Tikhonov and myself. Faiz Ahmed Faiz was the first man whom we met in the beautiful ancient Lahore, at the editorial office of the Urdu newpaper *Imroz*. A little embarrassed, he said as we were shaking hands: 'It's a pity, but there'll hardly be any conference at all. The situation is somewhat tense. Anyway, it's great that you have come. We'll try and make up for the conference by meeting with writers, journalists and just nice interesting people as I'm editor of two papers at least for the time being one the English *Pakistan Times* and the other, *Imroz*, in whose office we are now'.

Faiz was unsparing of his time and his loving heart. There were a lot of meetings, not only at Faiz's where we

first partook of Pakistani pilaf, but also crowded meetings both in Lahore and Karachi, the capital.

Faiz and his friends, writers and journalists, did all they could to show us as much as possible, though it was not at all easy, as there were still many enemies of the Soviet Union there: British colonialists who had reluctantly left Indian and Pakistani territories still maintained their agents there.

We spent about three weeks in Pakistan, the situation growing more tense, with each day. A stranger who dropped in at our hotel just before our departure said in passing: 'Don't be surprised if no one comes to see you off.' 'What about Faiz?' 'Neither will he.'

Everything became clear soon after we returned to Moscow. Faiz Ahmed Faiz had been thrown to that very prison we once passed about which he said, 'That's for criminals and progressives.'

He spent several years in that prison. I once asked him, 'Could you write in prison?' 'Of course I could,' he said, smiling. 'Nothing can stop you from writing poems anywhere.' Not long ago a journalist asked him, 'Did you lose contact with your readers during all the years you spent in prison?' 'On the contrary, our ties have never been stronger. I gained a martyr's halo. Prison has seen lots of politicians but a poet was a sensation. Besides, the years spent in prison proved to be a most fruitful period. For a poet imprisonment is no less stimulating than falling in love. Certainly, prison is little suited for creative work, it gives a poet enough time for thinking and expressing his thoughts in verse.'

That's what our dear Faiz was like and that's how he will remain in our memories. He spent thirty-five years fighting for the unity of Afro-Asian writers, and editing the *Lotus*, the unique quarterly of the Afro-Asian Writers'

Association, Faiz was a first-class editor, demanding and broadminded at the same time.

No doubt he will forever remain one of the summits of Pakistani Poetry, and a cherished memory for fighters for the freedom of mankind.

At the end of the last year, another book of his poems, *Dedication*, came out in the series of paperback supplements of the Soviet weekly *Ogonyok*, translated by Nikolai Tikhonov, Mikhail Isakovsky, Alexei Surkov, Vladimir Derzhavin, Rimma Kazakova, Stanislav Kunyanjev, Boris Slutsky, Miriam Salganik and other notable poets.

Faiz worked very hard in the Afro-Asian Writers' Association. Just recently, this September, we listened to his report about the *Lotus* and its plans for the future at the Secretariat sitting in Tunisia, the new residence of the *Lotus* editorial board. It used to be located in Beirut, which it had to leave after the Lebanon had been occupied by the Israeli.

Shortly before, I had met Faiz in Moscow, where he was staying in hospital. He looked much better in Tunisia. It was there that we realized we had been friends for thirty-five years. 'Half a lifetime!' wondered Faiz, shaking his head. 'And till our dying day,' I replied.

We were talking on a Mediterranean beach to the splashing of blue waves.

And now Faiz is no more, his trip to Lahore was to become the last journey of that great poet of the East, and our unforgettable friend.

Farewell, Faiz! You will forever remain in our hearts and in the hearts of generations who will cherish ever after your poetry.

Chapter Forty

Suffering for One's Ideals
A Letter to an Imaginary Friend

Khalid Sohail

Dear Prisoner of Conscience,
Let me start my letter with a short poem of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who was imprisoned for his ideas and ideals, titled *Captivity*.

What does it matter
If pen and paper
Have been snatched
From my hands?

I have
Dipped
My fingers in the blood
Of my heart

What does it matter
If
My lips
Have been sealed?
I have put
A tongue
In every link
Of my chain
(Translated by Daud Kamal)

My fellow writer friend,

I have never met you in person, but I know you very well as I have been reading your books for years. You have been a source of inspiration for many. You have been lighting candles of hope in the darkest alleys of our lives.

I feel inspired by you because you have
...faith in your ideals
...courage to challenge dictators and
...willingness to offer sacrifices.

You know your pen is mightier than the sword and your words are stronger than bullets. You are in touch with your truth and you can express it, share it, and celebrate it. You know your truth not only liberates you but also your readers.

Your words have been supporting and inspiring all those innocent men and women, young and elderly, ordinary and extra-ordinary people, who are caught in the cross-fire between religious fundamentalism and Western imperialism.

All your life you fought for the human rights of women, children and minorities.

You are aware that human dignity is sacred.
You are conscious that writers have the right to write.

You are determined that you belong to the creative minority of poets and philosophers, artists and painters, reformers and revolutionaries who are fighting for peace and harmony, democracy and social justice.

You belong to the group of writers like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Habib Jalib, Najeeb Mehfouz and Mehmood Darvesh who sacrificed their families and friends, freedoms and futures, for their ideals. Some had to face house arrest, others exile, some were imprisoned, others persecuted. All

those kings and dictators and army generals who persecuted them are forgotten, but these writers are still respected and revered as they are the leaders who raise social consciousness and take humanity to the next stage of human evolution.

I salute you my creative friend from the bottom of my heart.

Let me end my letter with another poem of Faiz as he believed, like many of us, that the dark night of oppression and suffering will end and the morning of love and harmony, peace and justice will begin one day. We need to be patient and support each other by lighting the candles of hope. The poem is titled 'A Few Days More':

A few days more
My love...
Only a few days.

We are constrained to breathe
This miasmic air
In the trackless jungle
Of oppression.

Let us try to endure it
A little longer
This wolf-torment
This cobra-grief
We know that suffering
Is our ancestral heritage
And we also know
That we are helpless
Captive bodies, chained emotions
Shacked minds and strangled speech.
And yet, in spite of all this

We go on living.

Life is like a tattered garment
Of a beggar
On which, every day, a new patch
Of pain is stitched
But this epoch of barbaric cruelty
Is coming to an end.

Be patient a little longer,
Our salvation is at hand.

The present is a burnt out wilderness:
We have to live, but not like this.

The diabolic, cold-blooded tyranny
Of our persecution
You have to bear it, but not like this.

Your beauty veiled by the dust
Of so many injustices
And the countless frustrations
Of my brief-lived youth
Moonlit nights,
Brittle mirrors of ice,
Sterility of desire,
Withering aerial roots
Ash-covered contours of the heart.

The body on the torturer's rack
A few days more
My love
Only a few days
(Translated by Daud Kamal)



Khalid Sohail, a poet, humanist and psychotherapist, was born in Pakistan in 1952. He received his MBBS from Khyber Medical College, Peshawar and completed his FRCP in Canada in 1982. Now he practices psychiatry in his clinic, Creative Psychotherapy Clinic, Whitby, Ontario, Canada.

Some of his books are:

Samandar aur Jazeeray, Urdu poetry
Dharti Maan Udaas Hay, Urdu short stories
A Broken Man, English stories
The Next Stage of Human Evolution, English essays.



Ashfaq Hussain, a poet, critic and essayist, was born in Pakistan in 1951.He obtained his Masters degree in Urdu literature from University of Karachi in 1974 and migrated to Canada in 1980. Presently, he is a producer at Asian Television Network, Canada.

Some of his books on Faiz are:

Faiz: Aik Jaiza
Faiz: Habib e Amber Dast
Faiz key Maghrabi Hawaley
Faiz: Fun aur Shakhsiat
Faiz: Sheeshoon ka Maseeha

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